Grub Street culture: the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist, 1716-1737

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the interaction of print culture and the practice of politics in Britain during the first half of the eighteenth century. The thesis also concerns itself with methodological problems, examining how historians have previously used newspapers in political, intellectual, and cultural history, and suggesting some new ways to go about matters. It focuses on the newspapers owned by Nathaniel Mist, a Jacobite printer, variously callled the *Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post*, *Mist's Weekly Journal*, and *Fog's Weekly Journal*.

The study is divided into three. The first section deals with the contents of the newspapers, news reporting, editorial comment and other miscellany, and advertising. This section is based on a detailed examination of the newspapers; to allow numerical analysis, a database was constructed of the precise details of the contents of every third newspaper, including how many lines of type each paragraph took up. This provides the context for the second section, where I reconstruct the political identity of the newspaper, examining its civil, ecclesiastical and cultural politics in turn.

The third section is an extended study of the 'Persian Libel' crisis of 1728, when Mist published a seditious libel attacking George II and Sir Robert Walpole and setting up the Stuart pretender as the rightful king. To escape the displeasure of the ministry, and prosecution for high treason, Mist fled to France. Meanwhile, his entire household was taken into custody and his press destroyed. Rather than just treating this as an unfortunate incident in the story of the growth of the liberty of the press, I seek to place it in the wider context of British print culture, particularly the nature of writing, publishing and censoring texts in early modern England. I also discuss the relationship between the British state and the practice of sedition.

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I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Julian Hoppit for all his guidance, constructive criticism, patience, and support. I should also like to thank Prof. Stephen Conway, who acted as secondary supervisor, who commented on various drafts of my work and has always been available for advice. It would only be right to thank Dr Mark Goldie, of Churchill College, Cambridge, for first suggesting that Nathaniel Mist's newspapers would be a good topic for doctoral research.

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Parts of Chapter 7 have been worked through as papers given to the Department of History's graduate seminar, the Long Eighteenth Century seminar at the IHR, and the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference. I would like to thank all who took part in the seminars for their questions and comments.

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Introduction

Nathaniel Mist (*d.*1737) – a former sailor, a printer, a Jacobite – plays a rather peripheral role in the existing historical scholarship on British print culture. His newspapers were *The Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post*, *Mist's Weekly Journal*, and *Fog's Weekly Journal*. Despite the occasional change of title, a Mist newspaper was produced for all but one week in the period between December 1716 and May 1737, nearly 1,100 individual issues. They were staples of a newspaper trade, opposed to a Hanoverian whig regime that sought to dominate British politics from the accession of George I in 1714. The variety of this print opposition has been masked by a concentration upon the 'figurehead' of Viscount Bolingbroke and his newspaper, the *Craftsman* (1726-50).[1] It would do well to redress the balance, to recall that the *Craftsman* was not the only opposition newspaper (perhaps not always even the most popular) available to eighteenth-century readers, and rescue Mist and his newspapers from their relative obscurity.

Mist was most unlike Bolingbroke – in tone he was rather more plebeian than patrician. Instead of holding centre stage as Secretary of State in Queen Anne's last turbulent ministry, Mist spent his life prior to Grub Street in the navy. (When alluding to these days in print later, the impression Mist

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[1] J. Black, 'An underrated journalist: Nathaniel Mist and the opposition press during the whig ascendancy', British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 10 (1987), p. 27. For Bolingbroke as the leader of a literary opposition to Walpole's ministry, see I. Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his circle: the politics of nostalgia in the age of Walpole (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); H.T. Dickinson, Bolingbroke (London, 1970); and Q. Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition: the case of Bolingbroke vs. Walpole', in N. McKendrick (ed.), Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J.H. Plumb (London, 1974), pp. 93-128.

sought to give was that of a common 'Jack Tar', a self-imagining none have questioned.[2]) Mist has, perhaps surprisingly, a longish entry in the original *Dictionary of National Biography*, and has been well treated in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, but in many ways these are not the story of the man, but his newspaper.[3] This entwining of the man and his newspapers can seem natural – indeed the paper died with him in 1737 – but is more likely the result of something that has been a particular problem for the present study: the sheer lack of historical evidence for Mist's life prior to the first publication of the *Weekly Journal* in 1714. Beyond the nautical suggestions, we know nothing of his life before Grub Street and little of his personal life during and afterwards. Paul Chapman summarises it best:

> Little is known of Mist's private life beyond the fact that his wife, Anne, appears to have supported him throughout his years of adversity, acting for example as an emissary to England for him in 1731. Mist had earlier been concerned for her health and seems to have moved from Boulogne to Paris from December 1729 until mid-1730 partly because the sea air was bad for her, as well as in order to save money. A son, James Nathaniel Mist, was born to them in March 1731 who was subsequently admitted as an apprentice printer to William Bowyer. Mist died of asthma on 20 September 1737 at Boulogne. His family was left in a degree of hardship, and his wife was forced to pawn his effects in order to pay outstanding customs duty to secure the release of a shipment of wine.[4]

The weekly journals were immensely popular: one issue (admittedly one containing an astonishingly virulent and instantly notorious libel) had a

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[2] The Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, October 25, 1718.
[3] Dictionary of national biography (CD-ROM, Oxford, 1997), art. 'Mist, Nathaniel'; P. Chapman, 'Mist, Nathaniel (*d.* 1737)', Oxford dictionary of national biography (Oxford, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18822, last accessed 17 April 2007.
[4] Chapman, 'Mist, Nathaniel (*d.* 1737)'. These details are gleaned from Mist's correspondence with the Jacobite court, preserved in the Royal Archives, Windsor.

print-run of over 10,000 copies.[5] Mist's papers were irritating enough to ensure close government surveillance and it was the most heavy-handed of ministerial interventions that forced the newspaper into crisis in 1728. This popularity, this proximity to the political flux of the early Hanoverian period, immediately raises questions for the historian. How did this notorious Jacobite and his newspaper, that genuflected before the memory of the Stuart dynasty, reach such levels of popularity during an age that has been successfully characterised as one that had disowned the 'rage of party' and was achieving political stability?[6] Indeed, does not a study of his newspapers help reveal, not an age of stability and confident Venetian oligarchy, but a generation of instability and a whig polity warily self-conscious of its own deficiencies?

The main basis for this study is a run of over a thousand separate copies of a newspaper.[7] Combining the resources of the British Library – the Burney Collection of early modern newspapers – and the holdings of the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library, it is possible to study almost every issue published between 1716 and 1737.[8] The Burney Collection of

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[5] A.S. Limouze, 'A study of Nathaniel Mist's weekly journals' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1947), p. 13.

[6] J.H. Plumb, The growth of political stability in England 1675-1725 (London, 1967), pp. 159-89.

[7] This could be seen as two, or three newspapers, depending on how serious a discontinuity one discerns in a change of masthead or title. This study takes as its basis that ownership by Nathaniel Mist lends a continuity to the newspapers, regardless of format or title, between 1716 and 1737. For a discussion of discontinuities between Mist's Weekly Journal and Fog's Weekly Journal, especially in regard to political argument, see Chapter 4, below.

[8] My sample was missing eighteen issues. The policies of research libraries regarding their newspaper holdings has been a matter of controversy in recent years: N. Baker, Double fold: libraries and the assault on paper (New York, 2001); R.J. Cox, Vandals in the stacks? A response to Nicholson Baker's assault on libraries (London, 2002). While the Burney Collection is

newspapers contain not only extensive holdings of the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist, but also those of his principal rivals – for example *Applebee's Weekly Journal*, the *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, the *London Journal* or the *British Journal*, as well as the aforementioned *Craftsman*. It is important to remember that Mist's newspapers should not be read on their own, as an ongoing serial narrative, closed to outside influence. They exist within the context of Grub Street, that area of London both geographically and metaphorically real, which was the home of Britain's print industry.[9] It is impossible to read the newspapers without realising that they were never read in isolation, many of the *Weekly Journal*'s articles reading as commentaries on the failings of the journalistic offerings of his rival printers.[10]

Work on Nathaniel Mist has been surprisingly sparse. Apart from a recent article, well-researched but ultimately unconvincing, that attempts to ascribe authorship of *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* (London, 1724) to Nathaniel Mist, little has been written on the man or his journals.[11] The main work of reference remains Arthur Sanford Limouze's unpublished 1947 thesis. For all its intrinsic virtues, Limouze's work has, inevitably, become dated as nearly sixty years of historiographical trends have washed around it. Our understanding of the political and social context of Britain in the eighteenth century has been enriched; the importance in recent decades of cultural history and, almost by extension, the 'history of the book' have transformed the way we think about print culture. This new study of Mist's newspapers has to be understood in these still-developing contexts.

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currently only available on microfilm ruinous to the eye, a project of digitisation has been undertaken and will soon be complete.

[9] P. Rogers, Grub Street: studies in a subculture (London, 1972). For the topographic realities of London's print trade, see J. Raven, 'St Paul's precinct and the book trade to c.1800', in D. Keene, R.A. Burns, and A. Saint (eds), St Paul's: the cathedral church of London 604-2004 (London, 2004), pp. 430-8.

[10] For a discussion of such rivalry, with regards to the reporting of news, see Chapter 2, below.

[11] A. Bialuschewski, 'Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the "General History of the Pyrates"', Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 98 (2004), pp. 21-38.

Britain in the first half of the eighteenth century: politics, state and society

The basic contours of the political world during the reigns of the first two Georges are generally understood by the establishment of the whig oligarchy (or supremacy). Whig loyalty to the Protestant Succession in the person of Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her issue, as well as to the interest of that Electorate during the War of Spanish Succession, was handsomely rewarded when George I arrived in London. Tories were thrown out of office, from the Treasury and the Secretaries of State down, and whigs locked into place. A German king then found himself reliant on anglophone ministers. The whig party immediately tightened its hold on parliament by repealing the Triennial Act and passing the Septennial Act; it tightened its hold on the people by passing such draconian measures as the Riot Act and, a little later, the Black Acts; it tightened its hold on the church through the episcopacy and the suppression of Convocation, the representative body of the Church that had proved hostile to the whig party and its policies. Adherents were rewarded and converts gained by patronage. The tory party was 'destroyed'.[12] In J.H. Plumb's estimation, in this new order 'power could not be achieved through party and so the rage of party gave way to the pursuit of peace'; this new form of politics was personalised as the victory of one whig, Sir Robert Walpole.[13]

A similar story can be told of the development of the British state during this period. While the political world altered beyond recognition in the early years of the eighteenth century, so did that institution around which it revolved and through which it operated: the state.[14] In this reading, the ramshackle English state of the restored Stuarts, too inefficient to achieve its aims in either the consolidation and independence of royal power or its foreign policy, was replaced by a British state marked by its relative efficiency in funding (through taxation and borrowing) the wars necessary to

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[12] Plumb, Growth of political stability, p. 172.
[13] Plumb, Growth of political stability, p. 189; J.H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole (2 vols, London & Boston, 1956-61).
[14] For an excellent, historicized introduction to the concept of 'the state', see R. Geuss, History and illusion in politics (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 14-68.

secure the Glorious Revolution regime and further its commercial expansion. This new form of state is best known by John Brewer's formulation, the fiscal-military state.[15]

While the period under consideration in this study was pacific by eighteenth-century standards – primarily because of the whig regime's pragmatic alliance with France – the experiences of the two long wars with France that immediately preceded it were vital to the transformation of the state.[16] With each war greater levels of expenditure had become necessary. These expenses were funded through taxation – legitimised and made politically acceptable through the new institutional permanence of parliament – and borrowing. The British state was able to borrow spectacular amounts of money from institutions such as the Bank of England and the East India Company at advantageous rates of interest, the debt often funded through specific acts of parliamentary taxation. The successful establishment of a national debt, while worrying to contemporaries, was again a source of stability.[17] These revolutionary changes in the purposes, institutions, and machinery of the British state of necessity had lasting effects on British society. New ways of life, new forms of property, were called into being –

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[15] J. Brewer, The sinews of power: war, money and the English state 1688-1783 (London, 1989); L. Stone (ed.), An imperial state at war: Britain from 1689 to 1815 (London, 1993); P. Harling, The modern British state: an historical introduction (Cambridge, 2001).

[16] The Nine Years' War (1689-97) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13). The succeeding peace and the alliance with France is often underplayed in the historiography of the period, undercutting as it does narratives of Anglo-French hostility and notions of a 'second Hundred Years' War'.

[17] M.J. Braddick, The nerves of state: taxation and the financing of the English state, 1558-1714 (Manchester, 1996); Brewer, Sinews of power, pp. 88-134; P.G.M. Dickson, The financial revolution in England: a study of the development of public credit, 1688-1756 (London, 1967); P. K. O'Brien, 'The political economy of British taxation, 1660-1815', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 41 (1988), pp. 1-32; H. Roseveare, The financial revolution, 1660-1760 (London, 1991). C. Brooks, 'Public finance and political stability: the administration of the land tax, 1688-1720', Historical Journal 17 (1974), pp. 281-300, illustrates how historically heavy taxes could both exploit and consolidate political stability.

ones not always appreciated by contemporaries.[18] British society became professionalised, as the numbers of officials under the crown were swelled by the ranks of the Excise and other executive offices of state, the learned professions of the law and medicine grew in prestige and power. The transformation of the state was feeding back into social change, encouraging the growth of the middling sort.[19]

Social change was also brought about by the most fundamental change to the state in the early eighteenth century: the replacement of the separate states of England and Scotland with the Kingdom of Great Britain. Following union in 1707 – which resulted in a curious hybrid of unitary state and particular national custom – an overarching national identity is supposed to have begun to smooth over any antagonistic differences between the two constituent kingdoms left over from the experiences of the seventeenth century.[20] This was the period when English and Scots became Britons. Again, the formative experience for this process was that of war. Some work, such as that of Stephen Conway, has concentrated on the practicalities of war and military service as a vehicle for cultural cohesion.[21] Linda Colley has, in a particularly influential body of work, stressed the importance of France as a counter-image, a negative to which Britons stood opposed to in the field of battle and to which 'Britishness' was opposed in the field of culture ('the Other', in theoretical terminology borrowed from Edward Said's *Orientalism*). This proceeds in a series of dichotomies: whereas France was Catholic,

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[18] J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition (Princeton, 1975), pp. 423-61.
[19] J. Barry & C. Brooks (eds), The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800 (Basingstoke, 1994); P.J. Corfield, Power and the professions in Britain, 1700-1850 (1995); G. Holmes, Augustan England: professions, state and society, 1680-1730 (London, 1982); M. Hunt, The middling sort: commerce, gender and the family in England, 1680-1780 (Berkeley & London, 1995); W. Prest (ed.), The professions in early modern England (London, 1987).
[20] T.A. Rae (ed.), The union of 1707: its impact on Scotland (Glasgow, 1974); J. Robertson (ed.), A union for empire: political thought and the British union of 1707 (Cambridge, 1995).
[21] S. Conway, The British Isles and the War of American Independence (Oxford, 2000).

Britain was protestant; whereas France was an absolutist monarchy, Britain was a constitutional monarchy; and whereas the French were slavish, Britons were free. Britishness cohered in ideas and representations of protestant liberty: religious freedom was guaranteed by a protestant establishment in church and state; political freedom ensured by property rights guarded by a free parliament.[22]

In these interlinked histories of eighteenth-century life, the recurring motif was essentially one of security. The crown was secure in the House of Hanover; government was secure in the hands of the whig party; the state was secure in its resources, military and financial; Britons themselves secure in their property and protestantism. However, this state of security is more readily apparent to historians than it was to contemporaries.

It may seem that, for the sake of brevity, Plumb's position has been caricatured. However, the above sketch of the rise of the whig supremacy is in essence that basic understanding of early Georgian politics that has been either attacked or taken as given. Recent work has, however, tended to stress the survival and importance of opposition to the whig oligarchy in general and Walpole in particular. Both Linda Colley and Eveline Cruickshanks – though with very different interpretations – have stressed the continuing vitality of the tory party, although as a party that was more often than not split by faction while exiled from office.[23]

Political opposition was not limited to the tory party. The relationship between toryism and Jacobitism is a historiographically fraught one. It is the major division between Cruickshanks and Colley: the former arguing for an identity between Jacobite and tory that Walpole himself would have

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[22] L. Colley, Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837 (New Haven & London, 1992); L. Colley, 'Britishness and otherness: an argument', Journal of British Studies 31 (1992), pp. 309-29; E. Said, Orientalism (London, 1979); K. Wilson, The sense of the people: politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785 (Cambridge, 1995). For a critical view of these historiographical developments, see J.C.D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660-1832', Historical Journal 43 (2000), pp. 249-76.

[23] L. Colley, In defiance of oligarchy: the tory party 1714-1760 (Cambridge, 1982); E. Cruickshanks, Political untouchables: the tories and the '45 (London, 1979).

understood, the latter insisting that Jacobitism was merely one strand of tory thought.[24] While there is evidently still a desire in certain quarters to continue wheedling out errant crypto-Jacobites from within the tory ranks, this prosopographical approach now seems to have run its course.[25] Rather than concentrating on the fortunes of Jacobitism as a party political force within Westminster, much of the best work on Jacobitism concentrates on its role in popular politics, as a language of political opposition to the changes wrought upon British society in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.[26] The importance of Jacobitism is thus made separate from discussions of its potential or viability as a (counter-) revolutionary conspiracy and linked instead to its popularity as a means of expressing discontent with the new status quo, if stopping short of forming a coherent movement aiming at the overthrow of the British state. This has direct ramifications for the present study. There is no doubting the personal sincerity of Nathaniel Mist's Jacobitism as revealed in his letters to the Stuart court-in-exile, his desire for a second restoration. However, that is not to say either that everyone who read his newspaper was a Jacobite, or that that segment of his audience that did recognise itself as Jacobite was part of an active conspiracy.[27]

The continuing popularity of Jacobitism as a political language of opposition provides then one backdrop for this study. However, much recent work on British social history – on crime, on popular protest, on the London mob – also undercuts these stories of security, pointing to the fractious nature of British society and the uncertainty of those in office of the

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[24] Cruickshanks, Political untouchables; Colley, In defiance of oligarchy; A. Hanham, '"So few facts": Jacobites, tories and the Pretender', Parliamentary History 19:2 (2000), pp. 233-58.

[25] For an example of continued Jacobite-hunting, see E. Cruickshanks, 'Charles Spencer, third earl of Sunderland, and Jacobitism', English Historical Review 113 (1998), pp. 65-76.

[26] P.K. Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, 1688-1788 (Cambridge, 1989).

[27] See especially Chapters 4 & 7, below.

permanence of their power.[28] The state may well have been stable; it was also paranoid.

Early modern print culture: literacy, print revolutions, and public spheres

This study must though be understood as also existing as a part of another narrative. Whereas the political and social context of the study belongs to a concept of a long eighteenth century, defined by a constitution forged as a settlement to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a fiscal-military state, and aristocratic leadership in politics and society, it can also be situated in a *longue durée* of early modernity and, specifically, the emergence and dominance of print culture. Print culture though should not be seen as some sort of conquering host that extirpated previous modes of communication. One has to bear in mind continuing, if altered, oral and manuscript cultures.[29] The history of the book has been aptly described as the attempt 'to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior of mankind during the last five hundred years'.[30] It is a potentially vast subject for the historian, although some of its more essential features can be briefly sketched out.

Most notable is a concern for technology. Literacy itself can be discussed in terms of its being a technology distinct from orality.[31] The early

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[28] J.M. Beattie, Crime and the courts in England, 1660-1800 (Oxford, 1986); J.M. Beattie, Policing and punishment in London 1660-1750: urban crime and the limits of terror (Oxford, 2001); J. Brewer & J. Styles (eds), An ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (London, 1980); L. Davison *et al* (eds), Stilling the grumbling hive: the response to social and economic problems in England (Stroud, 1992); T. Hitchcock, Down and out in eighteenth-century London (London, 2004); R.B. Shoemaker, The London mob: violence and disorder in eighteenth-century London (London, 2004).

[29] A. Fox, Oral and literate culture in England 1500-1700 (Oxford, 2000); A. Fox & D. Woolf (eds), The spoken word: oral culture in Britain 1500-1850 (Manchester & New York, 2002); H. Love, Scribal publication in seventeenth-century England (Oxford, 1993).

[30] R. Darnton, 'What is the history of books?', Daedalus 111 (1982), p. 65.

[31] W.J. Ong, Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word (London, 1982).

modern period can thus be seen as a period during which the technology of literacy became available to a far greater number of people in the west. This growth of literacy has most often been understood as being driven by deeper processes of commercial and religious change. Another obvious technological change is the printing press itself. This innovation, it is often argued, made readily available authoritative texts on a much larger scale. The press itself has been implicated as a crucial factor in other narratives of the diffusion of new ideas in religion and philosophy.[32] This view has been criticised by those who argue that it neglects the efficacy of manuscript as a medium and also by those who argue that the nature of print was not as uncomplicated, as fixed, or as authoritative.[33] These technological changes meant that by the turn of the eighteenth century there was a literate audience that viewed print as a legitimate source of information – the audience for (among other things) Nathaniel Mist's newspapers.

It is not enough though to know that there were printed texts and that there were readers for them. One must know how these texts were put to use. Many modern discussions of print culture revolve around the concepts and categories of the public sphere, first theorised and introduced by Jürgen Habermas.[34] Although not without its critics, the Habermasian concept of the public sphere has proved a great boon to cultural histories of the period. Especially notable is the renewed attention paid to that archetypal eighteenth-century institution, the coffee shop.[35] The coffee shop has been

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[32] E.L. Eisenstein, The printing press as an agent of change: communications and cultural transformations in early modern Europe (2 vols, Cambridge, 1979); E.L. Eisenstein, The printing revolution in early modern Europe (Cambridge, 1983); E.L. Eisenstein, Print culture and enlightenment thought (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986).

[33] A. Johns, The nature of the book: print and knowledge in the making (Chicago, 1998).

[34] J. Habermas, The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society (Cambridge, 1989); C. Calhoun (ed.), Habermas and the public sphere (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

[35] S.C.A. Pincus, '"Coffee politicians does create", coffeehouses and Restoration political culture', Journal of Modern History 67 (1995), pp. 807-34; L.E. Klein, 'Coffeehouse civility, 1660-1714: an aspect of post-courtly culture in England', Huntington Library Quarterly 59:1 (1997 for 1996), pp. 30-

understood as the key site for the eighteenth-century public, especially usefully to compare the normative claims of the public sphere – bourgeois, rational, meritocratic – with the historical experience.

It is neither possible nor especially desirable to strike a claim for the history of the newspaper as a distinct historical genre: such a category would be barely distinguishable from the history of the book. However, an examination of the historiographical treatment of the early modern periodical press in a brief outline of the history of the newspaper is necessary.

The 'newspaper' did not exist for the vast majority of the seventeenth century. Serial publications that sought to inform the public of current affairs, or 'diurnal occurrences', began fitfully to appear from 1641. Most obviously, the work of Joad Raymond is central to any discussion of the precursors of newspapers.[36] Raymond bases his interpretive work on a painstaking narrative of the titles and numbers of English-language newsbooks produced during the 1640s, always placing them within context of political events. Kevin Sharpe has recently commented that Raymond's work, along with that of Adam Fox and Adrian Johns, 'enables us to discern and comprehend the emergence – long before its Habermasian moment – of a public sphere in early modern England'.[37]

In this manner, the history of the newspaper has become a way of wrenching the Habermasian public sphere away from its moorings in the eighteenth century: it has become a chronologically imprecise category that is applicable across time, designating any and all popular political spaces.[38]

51; M. Ellis, 'The coffee-women, The Spectator and the public sphere in the early eighteenth century', in E. Eger *et al* (eds), Women, writing and the public sphere, 1700-1830 (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 27-52; B.W. Cowan, The social life of coffee: the emergence of the British coffee-house (London, 2005).

[36] J. Raymond, The invention of the newspaper: English newsbooks 1641-1649 (Oxford, 1996); J. Raymond (ed.), News, newspapers and society in early modern Britain (London, 1999); J. Raymond, Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain (Cambridge, 2003).

[37] K. Sharpe, 'Review of Joad Raymond, Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain', Times Literary Supplement, 10 October, 2003, p. 33.

[38] For a sixteenth-century public sphere, see P. Lake & M.C. Questier, 'Puritans, papists and the "public sphere" in early modern England: the

This development is not entirely to be welcomed, 'public sphere' as a phrase now often merely replacing the older and equally nebulous concept of 'popular opinion'. These new readings tend to neglect other aspects of Habermas's definition of the public sphere, such as the importance laid on 'rational-critical' debate. However, these works do demonstrate the existence by the middle of the seventeenth century of a commercial market for news, a market that was exploited by the early newspapers of the Restoration period, most importantly the official newspaper of the state, the *London Gazette*.[39]

That the early newspaper industry developed in the manner that it did is owing to the accidental death of pre-publication licensing in 1695. It is well known today that this was not a glorious liberation of the press, an admission of the right of the free-born Englishman to print what he cared, but was rather the result of a pragmatic consideration of the inadequacies of the licensing system and an inability to frame new regulations acceptable to Parliament.[40] However, while one can no longer view the lapsing of the Licensing Act as a brave, emancipatory blow in the cause of human liberty, neither can one deny the importance of its disappearing. Indeed, one historian has gone so far as to argue that the end of the Licensing Act was 'the greatest and most creative discontinuity of the period of the Revolution which marked off England sharply from its past and from contemporary Protestant as well as Catholic Europe, even from the Dutch Republic'.[41]

This end of pre-publication censorship is thus generally taken to be a point of departure in newspaper history, marking a shift from an 'early modern' or 'renaissance' prelude of licensed newspapers to the history of the newspaper proper. D.F. McKenzie links the end of licensing to a change in

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Edmund Campion affair in context', Journal of Modern History, 72 (2000), pp. 587-627.

[39] J. Sutherland, The restoration newspaper and its development (Cambridge, 1986).

[40] R. Astbury, 'The renewal of the licensing act in 1693 and its lapse in 1695', The Library, 5th ser., 33 (1978), pp. 296-322.

[41] G.C. Gibbs, 'Press and public opinion: prospective', in J.R. Jones (ed.), Liberty secured? Britain before and after 1688 (Stanford, Ca., 1992), p. 243.

economic circumstance, the 'changing conditions in a trade that could no longer be contained as a London monopoly'.[42] It certainly encouraged a boom for the nascent industry – the number of titles quickly multiplying as entrepreneurial printers rushed into a rapidly deregulated market.[43] The year 1695 is not then important because it marks the birth of a free press or a fourth estate but because it marks the birth of a new industry.

Despite the end of overt censorship and management, the newspaper industry ran according to certain regulations. The common law, the politicians, and the market established the rules of the game. Licensing was gone, but the freedom to publish was countered by the freedom to be damned in the courts for libel.[44] Governments, whether whig or tory, had little inclination to leave the newspaper press alone, to trust it to act with a due sense of responsibility and deference towards the actions of the state.[45] Politicians, whether in out of employment, had no little awareness of the possibilities of the press as a political weapon and quickly found uses for it in the bitter party disputes that dominated parliamentary politics in the early eighteenth century.[46] The newspaper industry was not just constrained from above, however. It was also shaped by market conditions: each newspaper was a business in itself (or at the very least a part of a wider printing business) and as such was fashioned by factors such as financing and consumer demand.[47] Each of these shaping forces – the law, politics, and the market – should be briefly examined.

The law of libel primarily dictated the limits of any press freedom. It has been suggested that one reason the Crown allowed the Licensing Act to

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[42] D.F. McKenzie, 'Trading places? England 1689 – France 1789', in H.T. Mason (ed.), The Darnton debate: books and revolution in the eighteenth century (Oxford, 1989), p. 22.
[43] J. Black, The English press in the eighteenth century (London, 1987), pp. 12-13; M. Harris, London newspapers in the age of Walpole: a study of the origins of the modern English press (Rutherford, New Jersey, 1987)
[44] P. Hamburger, 'The development of the law of seditious libel and control of the press', Stanford Law Review 37 (1985), pp. 661-765.
[45] L. Hanson, Government and the press 1695-1763 (Oxford, 1936).
[46] J.A. Downie, Robert Harley and the press: propaganda and public opinion in the age of Swift and Defoe (Cambridge, 1979).
[47] M. Harris, London newspapers, pp. 33-81.

be dropped in 1695 was an intention to employ the law of treason to rein in the press, especially the Jacobite press.[48] Whatever the intention of William III and his ministers, the law of treason had always proved an unwieldy instrument in controlling the press; the difficulty of promoting such a policy was reinforced by the passage of the Treason Trials Act of 1696, which diminished the Crown's freedom of movement in such cases.[49] If use of the laws of treason were impracticable as a means of disciplining the press, the solution was to use the laws of libel. Prosecutions for seditious libel were used sparingly, however.

For some historians, it seems difficult to place the history of newspapers outside of the history of party politics. There were opposition papers and ministerial papers (or, if one is feeling particularly censorious of the government of the day, ministerial 'propagandists'). The main point, then, is to read the newspapers – particularly their editorial matter and their straightforward political reporting – divine their sentiments and then place them on the high political map of whig and tory, court and country, Hanoverian and Jacobite. (Mist's orientation, under this scheme of things, wavers a little between Jacobite and high tory.) Much work has been done on individual periodicals, assessing the particular stances taken and the rhetoric they use to promote party causes.[50] The newspapers are therefore implicitly understood to be subordinate to party politics, to reflect points of view and represent particular positions taken. It also removes questions of readership: it seems to be the general assumption that readers bought those newspapers that best reflected their own partisan prejudices. One aspect of this project is therefore to more accurately reflect on the link between party politics and the press.

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[48] Hamburger, 'Seditious libel', pp. 717-25. For a more detailed account of government reaction to the early Jacobite press, see P. Monod, 'The Jacobite press and English censorship, 1689-95', in E. Cruickshanks & E. Corp (eds), The Stuart court in exile and the Jacobites (London, 1995), pp. 125-42.

[49] Hamburger, 'Seditious libel', pp. 666-8, 723-5.

[50] See, for example, J.A. Downie & T.N. Corns (eds), Telling people what to think: early eighteenth-century periodicals from *The Review* to *The Rambler* (London, 1993).

It must not be forgotten that the newspapers were commercial products, operating in a marketplace of print. The best studies of British newspapers see them not as political texts somehow afloat in an ether, but tethered to an industry alert to the need for profit. The British print industry was dominated by London and particularly the streets around St Paul's Cathedral that made up 'Grub Street'. The rise of the provincial press outside London has also been based in an understanding of the relationship between developing regional and national markets.[51]

Finally, attempts have been made to place the study of eighteenth-century print culture as a part of a wider 'media history'. The rise of media studies as a scholarly discipline has been met with both outright hostility and justifiable scepticism. Media history, on the other hand, must be considered as an attempt to find common theoretical ground between newspaper historians, such as Michael Harris, and those working on other media in other periods. In an editorial rather self-conscious of its subject's novelty, the editors of *Media History* write of

> a subject that has yet to be clearly located within the context of established areas of academic activity. The specific skills of analysis and imagination it requires; the particular forms of investigation and research which are most suited to its construction; a sense of how it fits into the process of cultural formation and can contribute to a general historical understanding, have yet to be clearly identified.[52]

One recent attempt to shore up some of these uncertainties has defined and delimited the subject as the history of 'the communication of information and ideas in words and images by means of speech, writing, print, radio, television and most recently by the Internet'.[53] Here then, the history of newspapers is incorporated within a much vaster timescale, a

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[51] H. Barker, Newspapers, politics and English society, 1695-1855 (London, 2000); Black, The English press; G.A. Cranfield, The development of the provincial newspaper 1700-1760 (Oxford, 1962); M. Harris, London newspapers; R.M. Wiles, Freshest advices: early provincial newspapers in England (Columbus, 1965).

[52] A. Aronson *et al*, 'Editorial', Media History 4 (1998), p. 5.

[53] A. Briggs & P. Burke, A social history of the media: from Gutenberg to the Internet (London, 2002), p. 2.

recognition that many of the concerns of a historian writing about an eighteenth-century London newspaper are shared by others working on different media in different periods.

A note on sources, structure and method

This dissertation begins, as did the project of research itself, with a close examination of the main sources – the newspapers themselves. Section one is in effect a study of the actual contents of the newspapers, and how those contents changed over the years. These three chapters have strong links methodologically as well as thematically. A vital part of this study has been the creation of a database of the contents of the newspapers, from the first issue of the *Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post* in 1716 to the last issue of *Fog's Weekly Journal* in 1737. That is to say over a thousand individual papers, or around 5,200 pages, each containing two columns of closely-printed text up to 1725, three columns thereafter. The subject matter of every letter or essay, every paragraph of news, every advertisement, has been recorded. On its own, this database would constitute little more than a consolidated index to the newspaper (although such an index is hardly without its uses). More importantly, every third issue of the newspaper has been effectively measured: the number of lines each item took up in the columns of the newspaper has been noted. This has allowed for a measure of statistical analysis of the contents in these first three chapters. Of course, these newspapers were not published in a vacuum, but were for sale alongside rival enterprises, other weeklies, other dailies, plus broadsides, pamphlets, books, and (from the 1730s) magazine digests. While this study concentrates on one particular newspaper, it has been necessary to study other printed sources, albeit with a less rigorous standard of scrutiny.

However, this study does not rely exclusively on the printed sources. Manuscript sources, while not plentiful, are important especially in regards to the political dimension of the newspaper. The Stuart Papers in the Royal Archives at Windsor have been calendared only up to 1720, publication of

which halted at 1718.[54] This has to a certain extent obscured the rest of the archive, which includes material by Mist and Wharton among others.[55] The State Papers Domestic, at the National Archives in Kew, are hardly obscure, but are again somewhat neglected for the reigns of the first two Georges. This may well have something to do – again – with the incomplete nature of the calendaring of these important papers.[56] Lastly, the British Library possesses the correspondence of Charles Delafaye, who served as Under Secretary of State 1717-1734.[57] Delafaye took upon himself much of the task of watching over the newspaper presses and much of the correspondence relates to his activities in this sphere.[58] While these sources illuminate the interaction between the worlds of political action and political press, manuscript sources that might shed light on the private life and commercial existence of Nathaniel Mist have been unforthcoming, despite searches of the London Metropolitan Archives, the archives of the Corporation of London, and various parish and ward records. It is to be hoped that there remain papers yet to be uncovered.

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[54] Historical Manuscripts Commission, Calendar of the Stuart Papers belonging to His Majesty the King, preserved at Windsor Castle (7 vols, London, 1902-23).

[55] While the Stuart Papers are kept at the Royal Archives at Windsor, and are referenced in the footnotes as such, in the course of research for the present study they were consulted via the copies kept on microfilm at Senate House Library, University of London. It is greatly to be desired that these negative exposure microfilms should be replaced at some point in the not-too-distant future, before the scholars consulting them should all go blind.

[56] A typescript calendar for the reign of George I is available at the National Archives. For the long and important reign of George II, there exist only manuscript calendars (not always as legible as one would like), again kept for consultation at the National Archives.

[57] M. Harris, 'Newspaper distribution during Queen Anne's reign: Charles Delafaye and the Secretary of State's office', in R.W. Hunt, I.G. Philip, & R.J. Roberts (eds), Studies in the book trade: essays in honour of Graham Pollard (Oxford, 1975), pp. 139-51; J.C. Sainty, 'A Huguenot civil servant: the career of Charles Delafaye, 1677-1762', Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London 22 (1975), pp. 398-413.

[58] London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts 75451, Althorp Papers, vol. cli., letters to Stephen Poyntz from Charles Delafaye, Under Secretary of State (1728-1730).

Chapter One examines the business of advertising in the newspaper. This might strike the reader as strange at first. Why not begin with news coverage? Is it that not the defining mark of the newspaper? The emphasis on 'business' is important in this context. The newspaper was a highly commercialised object and a newspaper such as Mist's relied, in the absence of any subsidy, on its incomes from advertising. The vast majority of the contents of the newspaper was advertising and it is for this reason that the study opens with a consideration of the notices that crammed the back pages of the *Weekly Journal*. Chapter One discusses what was being advertised, how it was being advertised, and for whom it was advertised.

Chapter Two will concentrate on the actual news content. On one level, this means examining types of news, how the balance of newspaper coverage shifted between foreign and home news, between news of the court and, say, reports of horse races at Newmarket. The comparative element of the second chapter will not confine itself to Mist's rivals but will also consider other ways in which news circulated: the oral culture of rumour and gossip, as has recently been delineated by Adam Fox, surely did not pass away with the accession of Queen Anne.[59]

It was not just news coverage that sold a weekly journal, however. How could it be when the daily newspapers supplied just that commodity more frequently for the news hounds of the coffee shops? What Mist referred to as his 'amusements' or his 'entertainments' made the paper, and its weekly rivals, distinctive in the marketplace of print. Chapter Three concentrates on these letters, essays and other miscellaneous writing that, generally speaking, opened the newspaper. It seeks to place the letters from correspondents in the context of the wider epistolary culture of the eighteenth century. Newspaper letters are surely atypical of the medium: whereas most critics have characterised the letter as a private medium, these letters to the newspaper were designed specifically to be public. With this in mind, this chapter examines the letter from the point of view of the (mainly

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[59] Fox, Oral and literate culture, pp. 335-405.

pseudonymous or anonymous) correspondents and the recipients, and the rules of correct conduct that governed newspaper correspondence.

The second part of the study uses the evidence of the contents of the newspapers to reconstruct their political identity. As mentioned above, historians have often appended the labels 'Jacobite' and 'tory' to discussions of Mist's newspapers. There is obviously much sense in this. Yet they can often mislead in their imprecision – or rather they leave the reader not with a good idea of what the newspapers argued or stood for in themselves, but instead lend preconceived characteristics of what a Jacobite or tory newspaper would be like. These three chapters then seek to unpack the labels Jacobite and tory, returning to the arguments and voices that are to be found in the papers themselves.

Part Two is again split into three – three chapters to discuss three aspects of this political identity, civil, ecclesiastical, and cultural. The first chapter, on civil politics, is the most straightforward and requires little in the way of clarification. This chapter examines that which is often just described as 'political' *tout court*: matters of political theory, attitudes to the crown and its ministers (particularly its 'prime' minister), parties and parliaments, the public and the people. Perhaps this distinction of a civil politics only makes sense with reference to the subsequent Chapter Five, on the ecclesiastical, or denominational, politics of the newspapers. Such a distinction may appear artificial. Of course, to a certain extent it is, and is needed because a single chapter on both the politics of state and the politics of church would either prove too unwieldy or would necessitate the excision of too much relevant material.

However, there is also a positive argument for this division. It is often the case that, when writing their histories, historians reserve certain pieces of evidence to tell a particular story. That piece of evidence then becomes so entwined with the historian's narrative that it is only ever used for that particular historiographical function. To a certain extent, this has happened to the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist. Mist's papers represent a story of how Jacobitism switches from divining political legitimacy in a discourse of

inheritance and right to an adoption of contractarian arguments (often labelled 'Lockean'). This is the purpose of the newspapers: an illustration of strategic changes in political argument, how a movement 'modernises' its thought.

Whether this story of political adaptation is really the case or not is discussed in Chapter Four on civil politics. However, this story of an abandonment of traditional (stereotypical?) Jacobite arguments, of ditching the out-moded ideological baggage of a previous generation, does not always readily sit alongside a close reading of the masses of newsprint that actually make up Mist's *Weekly Journal*. This is especially true with regards to the religious aspect of the newspapers, an aspect that is generally ignored in 'modernisation' readings. It is necessary to reintegrate the religious politics of the newspaper – Mist's support for the strictest orthodoxy in the Church of England and intense dislike for dissent (with interesting ambivalence towards non-jurors and Catholics) are fundamental to the political character of the newspaper. To subsume them once more to an essentially secular vision of politics would be to continue a misleading emphasis on the politics of parties and parliaments. Mist, like most Jacobites (and also like many eighteenth-century Britons who were quite satisfied with the reign of the House of Hanover), saw their religion as fundamental to their political identity. Ironically enough, to highlight this union of political and religious identity, to ensure the space with which to treat it with its proper prominence, it has been necessary to divide religious politics into its own, separate, chapter.

The final chapter of the second section, Chapter Six, also attends to a neglected aspect of Mist's politics. 'Cultural politics' is perhaps something of an inadequate term, but it seeks to catch the politics of life outside of church and state. In the case of Mist, this means, in effect, the politics of London life. The experience of the metropolis, and of the changing patterns of life that marked both the City of London and the developing West End of the City of Westminster (not always conceived of as two parts of the same conurbation, but often presented as opposites), provided Mist with a great deal of the raw material of his reportage: his political attitudes were equally shaped by them.

This chapter explores the concept and possibility of a 'tory politeness'. Eighteenth-century politeness has often been conceptualised as a whig project conjoining civility in conduct with commercial activity. While Mist's attitudes to trade and finance are not identical to the whig writers of *The Spectator* – he shares the widespread and essentially tory mistrust of the new money and stockjobbing, for instance – he does not entirely reject the new world of commercial activity out of hand; he is not 'impolite'.

Precisely how toryism, trade and politeness are reconciled in the pages of Mist's newspapers is examined with reference to the newspaper's attitudes to the new finance (and particularly the rise and fall of John Law and his system), and the links between trade and fashion in the newspaper's coverage of the calico controversies, where anger fomented by the apparent decline of the English woollen manufactures was taken out on the clothes of the women of the city. The London theatre was one particular site of these cultural politics, here used as the prime example. While his vendetta against Colley Cibber, hack playwright and hack poet laureate, can be seen in terms of a personal attack on another, more successful, denizen of Grub Street, other developments in the theatre, such as the growing popularity of foreign language (particularly Italian) opera and the growing fees of the leading performers, are also seen as part of a wider cultural politics.

Having thus established a political identity for the newspapers that is consistent with a close reading of the actual contents, this dissertation draws to a conclusion with a study of the major crisis of 1728 – the publication and prosecution of the so-called 'Persian Libel', a pseudonymous letter purportedly commenting on the recent usurpation of the Persian throne following a revolution in that Empire, but clearly also a commentary on the usurpation of the British throne by the House of Hanover. This constituted a seditious libel and brought about the prosecution of the newspaper, the exile in France of Mist, and the arrest and trial of his employees and associates.

This matter is dealt with separately partly because it is the pivotal event in the newspaper's history – forcing the change in title and management as the paper changed its name from *Mist's Weekly Journal* to

Fog's Weekly Journal. It is this event that generally merits Nathaniel Mist's inclusions in other political histories of the period, an example of the British government's continued monitoring of printed opinion and the struggle of the press to be free. If it was not dealt with separately, it would have to be discussed in every chapter, a repetition that could be trying for any reader.

A close reading of the Libel is followed by a discussion of the circumstances of its publication. The product of the Duke of Wharton, one of the more curious inhabitants of Grub Street, the Libel is placed in the context of the other works of this *soi-disant* "Jacobite Whig" and his connections with the Jacobite press. However, while the Jacobite subtext is of course of great importance, there has been a curious lack of discussion of the Libel's more explicit contexts. This chapter seeks to examine the 'Persian' aspects of the Libel: the state of knowledge of Persia in early eighteenth-century Britain, the persistent interest in Persian affairs that had been a feature of the news columns of Mist's papers some years before the appearance of the Libel, and contemporaneous translations of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* that appeared in *Mist's Weekly Journal* and other newspapers. One aim of this chapter is then to situate the Libel more completely in the print culture of the day, emphasising the links between the politics of the paper, its news reportage and wider developments on Grub Street.

Finally, this chapter also seeks to comment upon the relationship between the state and seditious activity, of which the Libel is an obvious example. It examines the continuing role that government censorship played, even after the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695.

PART ONE

THE CONTENTS OF THE NEWSPAPER, 1716-1737

Chapter 1

'This is to give notice': advertising in the *Weekly Journal*[1]

Introduction

It might seem odd to begin a study of the contents of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers with a consideration of material that was crammed away on the back pages of the *Weekly Journal*, but such a focus serves two purposes: it emphasises the overwhelming importance of advertising material to the commercial enterprise of the newspaper; and, secondly, advertising was not only the most important aspect of the newspaper commercially – it was also the most dominant aspect in terms of the use of available page space. The majority of the contents of the newspaper were not the product of Mist, or his associates in the printing trade, or his anonymous contributors. It was not news of the wider world, or entertainment, or polemic. Instead it was the direct input of his audience. The back pages of the newspaper were taken up with advertisements, curt communiqués from the commercial world of eighteenth-century Britain. Often noted by historians and other writers for their charm and colour, the notices contained in the *Weekly Journal* point towards the myriad enterprises that took to advertising their wares in newspapers: booksellers, suppliers of medicines, and shopkeepers all turned to merchandising through print. Advertisements tied Mist directly to the business realities of the day: without any known political subsidy, they may well have represented the greater part of his income from the newspaper.

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[1] A common beginning to advertisements, e.g. that for 'chymical washballs', Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, 9 May 1719.

Advertising also provided the British government with revenue, through the Stamp Acts of 1712 and 1724 – measures that were as much about financing the state as regulating the press. These notices thus were of profit to both Mist and the state he deemed illegitimate.

The advertisements placed in the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist can tell us about far more than just the commercial necessities of Grub Street. Most importantly, they can help the historian gain an impression of who was actually reading the newspapers. Diaries and letters could lead to certain individuals and tell us of their particular reactions to the newspapers they read, but such evidence is lacking. In such an absence, advertisements are a necessary source in building up a broader picture of Mist's wider readership. This approach has been fruitfully employed, for instance, to reconstruct the audience for an earlier periodical, John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*. Helen Berry has argued that 'material goods and services which were advertised appealed to readers of a certain income, fashion and taste, which in turn indicated their conjectured occupation, sex and social status'.[2] Such an application has been recognised for some time, and has already been used in some slight way to question earlier views of Mist's audience being composed of 'mainly working-class readers'.[3] Ignoring the question of whether one can speak sensibly of an early eighteenth century 'working class', R.B. Walker felt that 'the advertisements for country estates, farms,

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[2] H. Berry, 'Gender, society and print culture in late seventeenth-century England, with special reference to the *Athenian Mercury* (1691-97)' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998), p. 71.
[3] R.B. Walker, 'Advertising in London newspapers, 1650-1750', Business History 15:2 (1973), p. 121.

inns to let, for the sale of ministers' gowns, books and tulip bulbs, indicate[d] that at least some of the readers were better-off'.[4]

A systematic study of the advertising present in the newspapers should build upon such conjectures. For instance, an examination of the types of books presented for consumption would serve to reveal more clearly the intellectual and cultural backdrop of Mist's intended readership. Similarly, some knowledge of the geographical distribution of Mist's newspapers could be gained, merely by noting from where these notices were sent. More pertinently perhaps, it could lend objective support for assumptions that are commonly held about newspaper audiences. Newspaper audiences have generally been imagined as a group through a study of the political stance of the newspaper, however that may have been defined. Mist's newspapers are thus thought of as Jacobite newspapers for Jacobite readers. A study of the advertisements, which is a study of newspaper users, offers a way of testing such a generalization.

Advertising in the eighteenth century: commerce and print

If there is any debate among historians whether eighteenth-century British society was one in which the consumer was a central figure and consumption a vital feature of economic life, it concerns mainly questions of chronology rather than actuality: but if eighteenth-century society was indeed a commercial society, when did this change in economic habits occur?[5] One

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[4] Walker, 'Advertising in London newspapers', p. 121.

[5] N. McKendrick, J. Brewer & J.H. Plumb, The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England (London, 1983); L.

must also ask who precisely was affected by such a shift - surely not only the middling orders and the elite alone. Even if the labouring poor were excluded from active participation through cost constraints, the new consumer society of the eighteenth century would have been readily apparent to them.

It was once declared that although the eighteenth century as a whole was witness to 'a consumer boom', only in the last twenty-five years of the century did demand for goods reach such a frenzy of buying and selling that the term 'revolution' could be judiciously applied.[6] Paired with the industrial revolution on the supply-side of the British economy, these two economic revolutions were seen as twin foundations of modernity. As with the industrial, the consumer revolution was taken to have no definite start date, no fixed point to which all consequences could be dated back to, though it was assumed to be somewhere in the second half of the century. It is perhaps though of far greater benefit – albeit equally as vague – to see this consumer revolution as a phenomenon of the long eighteenth century. The commodification of culture, the new 'world of goods', is certainly witnessed to in the advertising featured in all the newspapers of the earlier decades of the period. The one study of eighteenth-century newspaper advertising of any real length explicitly seeks to build on – and improve upon – what J.H.

Weatherill, Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain 1660-1760 (London, 1988); J. Brewer & R. Porter (eds), Consumption and the world of goods (London, 1993); J. Brewer, The pleasures of the imagination (London, 1997); S. Pennel, 'Consumption and consumerism in early modern England', Historical Journal 42:2 (1999), pp. 549-64.

[6] McKendrick, Brewer & Plumb, Birth of a consumer society, p. 9.

Plumb considered to be the new commercialization of leisure that, for him, so marked the period.[7]

The shifts in economic activity towards a consumer culture coincided then in the eighteenth century with the rise of the press in Britain. Traditional, narrative histories of advertising stress this coincidence, seeing the story of publicity as being intimately linked with not only newspapers, but also other printed ephemera such as broadsides and handbills. These histories of English advertising begin with Caxton and march onwards with the progress of print.[8] Historiographical models that associate the emergence of a European bourgeoisie, commercial society, and a 'public sphere' – while rejecting such a simple narrative story – make much the same point.[9]

One recent study of eighteenth-century advertising has challenged the assumptions of such approaches to consumption in the eighteenth-century, in regards to both its revolutionary aspect and the stress on newspaper advertisement.[10] It should be remembered that newspaper advertisements were not the only means of publicising goods. Nor indeed was this solely a phenomenon restricted to the world of print. The trade card, the shop sign,

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[7] J.J. Looney, 'Advertising and society in England, 1720-1820: a statistical analysis of Yorkshire newspaper advertisements' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1983), especially pp. 157-203.
[8] B.B. Elliott, A history of English advertising (London, 1962); T.R. Nevett, Advertising in Britain: a history (London, 1982).
[9] C. Wischermann, 'Placing advertising in the modern cultural history of the city', in C. Wischermann & E. Shore (eds), Advertising and the European city: historical perspectives (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 1-3.
[10] C. Walsh, 'The advertising and marketing of consumer goods in eighteenth-century London', in Wischermann & Shore, Advertising and the European city, pp. 79-95.

all spoke to a market immersed within a graphic as well as a print culture.[11] (The continuing importance of the shop sign can be seen in the few illustrations that accompanied certain, no doubt more expensive, advertisements in the *Weekly Journal*: crude reproductions of the signs of the shops where one could buy the goods on offer.[12]) It is important to stress that this chapter – considering as it does advertising techniques in one section of the periodical press, which was itself just one medium among many for advertising – can not seek fully to represent eighteenth-century advertising. It can however make a contribution to such an enterprise.

This discussion of newspaper advertising excludes consideration of so-called 'puffs', paragraphs extolling certain goods and services appearing outside the boundaries of the advertisement columns, advertisements masquerading as news. It has been suggested that these were advertisements none the less, just under a more 'polite' guise; avoiding the negative associations of trade that might have proved off-putting to a middling-sort newspaper audience increasingly concerned with questions of gentility.[13] Despite this, they are not included in the following survey. Firstly, difficulties arise from the lack of any specific evidence to differentiate between puffs and other forms of news. Secondly, and more importantly, I would suggest that puffs are different from other forms of advertisement

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[11] M. Berg & H. Clifford, 'Commerce and the commodity: graphic display and selling new consumer goods in eighteenth-century England', in M. North & D. Ormrod (eds), Art markets in Europe, 1400-1800 (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 187-200.

[12] The various marketing strategies open to eighteenth-century shopkeepers are discussed in H.-C. Mui & L.H. Mui, Shops and shopkeeping in eighteenth-century England (London, 1989), pp. 221-48.

[13] Walsh, 'Advertising and marketing', pp. 82-3.

precisely because they are not openly declared. They were a subterfuge, employed another form of rhetoric, and sought to work on the potential consumer in another manner. This chapter concentrates instead on the advertisements that were openly paid for by business people and others and instantly recognisable to the reader as such.

Even if the use of newspaper advertisement was not then a uniquely important tool of eighteenth century marketing for retailers, rather one method among many 'to reinforce knowledge of the shop's reputation', it retains its importance for the historian.[14] Not only do the advertisements say much about the newspaper and its readership, they have wider implications for eighteenth-century cultural and economic history. I will begin by first examining what advertising meant for the *Weekly Journal* as a newspaper and as a business. This will be followed by a discussion of advertising by type, and what advertisements and advertising meant not only for the reader exposed to them, but also for the advertiser responsible.

Advertising and the Weekly Journal

Advertising was intimately linked to the physical format of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers. The 'weekly journal' as a genre of periodical publication, of which Mist's was one among others (such as the *British Gazetteer* or *Applebee's Original Weekly Journal*), was itself a response to the changing nature of the role of advertising in printed material and the new regulations of the state. While often seen solely as an attempt to control the excesses of

[14] Walsh, 'Advertising and marketing', pp. 92-3.

the political press in the absence of any system of pre-publication censorship, the Stamp Act of 1712 was just as concerned with raising revenue for a country dealing with the financial implications of the War of the Spanish Succession.[15] Clearly, newspaper advertisements were seen by the administration of the time as a reliable source of income. The initial crisis that the newspaper industry suffered was not prolonged. However, if the Stamp Act destroyed some, it was also indirectly responsible for an entirely new range of titles.

This new type of newspaper was defined not just by its periodicity (published weekly on Saturdays), but also by its appearance. *The Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post* consisted of six pages, two columns each. Into these boundaries were crammed the business of an early eighteenth-century journal: the letter-essays, the news, and the advertisements, all in various sizes of type, reflecting not upon the importance of the matter but the need to fill the pages of the paper with some suggestion of order. In this way, Mist's paper was completely typical of the weekly press.

All the weekly journals shared this common appearance, dimensions determined by the impact of statute law. Entrepreneurial exploitation of the terms of the first Stamp Act had allowed for the creation of an unstamped newspaper form. The 1712 measures were defined by the physical size of the paper: a halfpenny on periodicals printed on a half-sheet or less, and a penny on those made of a whole sheet. However, 'the Act was badly drafted.

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[15] G.C. Gibbs, 'Government and the English press, 1695 to the middle of the eighteenth century', in A.C. Duke & C.A. Tamse (eds), Too mighty to be free: censorship and the press in Britain and the Netherlands (Zutphen, 1987), pp. 89-92.

Imposts were levied on all papers of a single sheet or of two, but no provision was made for taxing newspapers of an indeterminate size, and Grub Street was soon to discover the immunity of the format of a sheet and a half or six pages'.[16]

This format thus became attractive for profit-minded printers and it was this format that Mist initially used for his paper until the closure of the legal loophole with the passing of another Stamp Act in 1724. As a result of the 1724 act Mist radically altered the shape of the paper, to four pages of three columns. The illustrative woodcut used as a masthead that had taken up so much space was dropped, replaced with the stark words of the amended title, *Mist's Weekly Journal*. Justifying this transformation, this 'mutilation' as a front page article in the new-look journal declared it to be, Mr Mist took ironic pleasure in the thought that, now the paper was stamped, he would be helping to bear the debts of the nation so that 'at next Sessions of Parliament, the Tax on Candles, Leather, or some other Manufacture, which deserves Encouragement more than the Paper Trade, may be taken off, to the great Ease of the middling and poorer Sort of People'.[17] It was, again, a change in format shared by his competitors, each reacting to the changing rules of the game, and this was how the newspaper would appear until *Fog's* ceased publication in 1737.

Advertisements had other implications for Mist's newspapers. In the same issue that Mist apologised for the ungainliness of the new format, he

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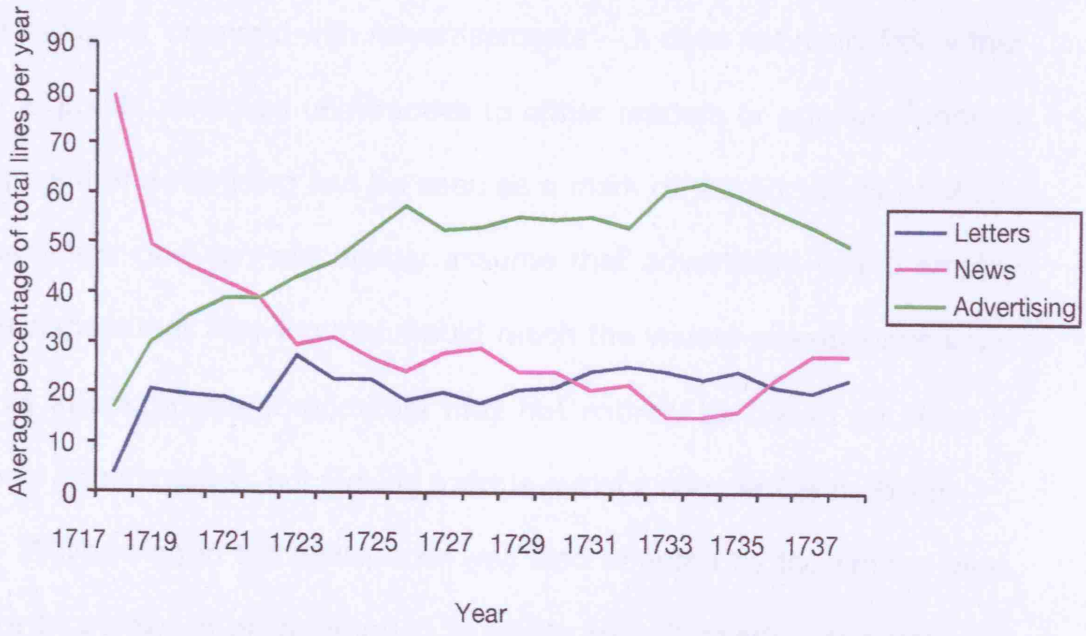
[16] L. Hanson, Government and the press 1695-1763 (London, 1936), pp. 11-12.

[17] Mist's Weekly Journal, 1 May 1725.

went on to assure his readers that, despite the change in appearance, the contents of the newspaper would be unaffected. Figure 1, below, illustrates how this balance between the editorial matter, news reporting, and advertising actually altered between 1717 and 1737. To be fair to Mist, the amount of room allotted to editorials and news reporting did remain fairly constant after the restructuring, as it had since 1723. What the changes in structure tended to hide was the long growth of advertising material in the newspaper. Figure 1 demonstrates this clearly, as advertising as a proportion of the newspapers contents climbed steadily to a peak in 1725, stabilised for the rest of the decade, experienced a short boom in the early 1730s, and finally began to tail off in the final years of *Fog's*, when diminishing advertising could be a sign of a diminishing audience.

Fig.1 The contents of Mist's newspapers, 1717-1737



The statistics are based upon how many lines within a column were devoted to a subject, rather than measurements of physical space, such as column inches. As space was fixed by both production technology and the business logic of the Stamp Acts, changes in content were dependent on changes in the size of the newsprint. For this reason, the column inch would not accurately reflect the relative amount of potential space taken up by any given advertisement. The text for public announcements, for instance, was commonly in a smaller, more cramped, type than those for book advertisements. Similarly, while two medical advertisements appear to be equal in physical size, one may be a far smaller type in order to more economically cram in some lengthy encomium to its efficacy. The graph thus reflects changes that would not necessarily be obvious to the busy reader.

While some did notice the growth of advertising in newspapers – James Read, printer of the rival *Weekly Journal, or British Gazetteer*, sneered at newspapers 'cramm'd with Advertisements' – it does not really follow that such a growth would be unattractive to either readers or printers.[18] Indeed the growth of advertising can be seen as a mark of the popularity of Mist's newspapers; one can reasonably assume that advertisers would employ those papers that they thought would reach the widest possible audience. Read's attack on his competitors may not entirely be based on ideas of editorial good practice, but making a virtue out of a commercial problem.

Advertising in the newspaper was also affected by the time of year. Figure 2, below, is an attempt to illustrate this. It charts the amount of

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[18] Weekly Journal, 22 May 1725; Harris, London newspapers, p. 58.

advertising in the newspaper over the course of the year in the three-year period 1729-31. The choice of a three-year period is for the sake of clarity, while the choice of the precise period is an attempt to chart advertising when the newspaper was at the peak of its popularity, while avoiding the exceptional years of 1725 and 1728 ('exceptions' because of the change in format in 1725 and the disruption caused by the suppression of 1728 to the paper's production schedule).

Fig.2 Total advertising per issue over year, 1729-1731

Figure 2 illustrates the seasonality of advertising in what was by that point *Fog's Weekly Journal*, a seasonality that Looney could not show in his

provincial Yorkshire newspapers.[19] The series illustrates the amount of space advertising takes up in each newspaper in my sample. Because of the nature of the sample, counting every third paper in the series, the issues counted do not then exactly correspond to the same date, though they are published at proximately similar times of the year. (It will also be noticed that, in 1729 and 1731, seventeen issues were included in the sample, whereas in 1730, eighteen issues were included.)

The seasonal pattern shows growth in advertising in issues 1 to 4, corresponding to January to March. The space given to advertising then declines (dramatically so in 1731) until nadirs are reached in issues 12 to 14, or late August to October. Advertising then begins to recover and reach a new peak in the last issues up to mid-December, before Christmas. This pattern is similar, although not precisely identical, to that found by James Tierney in his study of book trade advertisements in the newspaper press of the latter half of the century: two peaks – one in spring and another in the weeks around Christmas – separated by 'a long, slow summer'.[20] It suggests that the annual rhythms of newspaper advertising were mainly influenced by the commercial logistics of the book trade, as other forms of advertisement remain at steady levels across the year.[21] This pattern also ties newspaper advertising to the London 'season' – it was not just political news that is hard

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[19] Looney, 'Advertising and society', pp. 55-8. This is possibly because of Looney's use of average column inches over the quarter.
[20] J.E. Tierney, 'Advertisements for books in London newspapers, 1760-1785', Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 30 (2001), p. 156.
[21] Looney had suggested that individual types of advertisements might well prove seasonal, 'Advertising and society', pp. 59-61.

to come by in the summer months when Parliament was up. It should also be noted that this pattern seems to hold true throughout the century.[22]

The Weekly Journal *and the world of goods*

Before one can go any further, it is necessary to determine just what products were being advertised. Quantitative techniques are obviously important here. This approach is exemplified by R.B. Walker's study, which first sought to exploit newspaper advertisements for the purposes of economic and social history and to leave behind an approach concentrating 'superficially on the evident humour, quaintness, and evocativeness of many of the advertisements'.[23] By categorising the advertisements, one could build up a 'profile' of wider trends, most notably the predominance of certain types of advertisement.

Previous studies of the contents of the London newspaper press have tended to avoid statistical analysis. It is easy to understand why, given the sheer mass of material, the divergent newspaper forms and the scope of the studies themselves. To examine every newspaper over a fifty-year period, or the entire eighteenth century, or even from 1621 to 1861, and to record the subject matter of every issue would be foolhardy, more likely impossible. However, it does mean that the resulting analyses are ultimately impressionistic; such approaches to coverage of newspaper contents tend to

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[22] Looney, 'Advertising and society', p. 61; Tierney, 'Advertisements for books', p. 156; J. Brewer, Party ideology and popular politics at the accession of George III, (Cambridge, 1976), p. 143.
[23] Walker, 'Advertising in London newspapers', p. 112.

concentrate on what particularly struck the particular historian.[24] There is nothing necessarily wrong with this approach. Michael Harris, for instance, chose to concentrate on what he described as 'the dominant interests' of politics and trade.[25] Harris also has a wider objection to such statistical analysis beyond any impracticality. He suggests that Walker's quantitative approach and his division of types of advertising

> fails to ... indicate how the different kinds of advertising were used. By applying a framework classification, the quantifier inevitably narrows the range of analysis. Not all advertisements for books are doing the same thing, nor are all advertisements relating to crime, and this reservation applies across the whole range of material.[26]

While there is some sense to this, it is hardly a good enough reason to completely eschew such a methodology in all cases. The narrowing of analysis that Harris discusses can actually be of great utility to the historian presented with such a mass of evidence. It is not the case that there are two divergent and unconnected paths for the researcher to take, quantitative and qualitative, and that once the choice is made one must not step off the route for fear of getting lost. Categorisation occurs in all analyses – that they are not consciously based on the simple rigour of counting does not avoid this. Once a framework classification is completed, there is no reason why the

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[24] M. Harris, London newspapers in the age of Walpole: a study of the origins of the modern English press (London, 1987), pp. 156-88; J. Black, The English press in the eighteenth century (London, 1987), pp. 25-86; J. Black, The English press, 1621-1861 (Stroud, 2001), pp. 50-79.
[25] Harris, London newspapers, p. 166.
[26] Walker, 'Advertising in London newspapers' Business History 15:2 (1973), pp. 112-30; M. Harris, 'Timely notices: the uses of advertising and its relationship to news during the late seventeenth century', Prose Studies 21 (1998), p. 142.

historian cannot then move on to examine the varieties and nuances of the language of advertising.

This is not just an extension of the caveat that Jeremy Black holds, and Harris himself shares, that statistical analysis of advertising is rendered unhelpful by the existence in the news columns of paid-for stories, or 'puffs'.[27] That is a comparatively minor matter. It also seems to avoid Harris's very own criticism of Walker: that it ignores differences in intention and reception. Presumably self-declared advertisements could have and would have been read in a different manner to the news articles, regardless of the financially questionable provenance of the latter. The language was entirely different: advertisements follow certain forms, depending on the particular goods or services being offered or announcements being made. The entire point of puff pieces is that they do not use these recognisable forms, but are camouflaged. They are determinedly different from advertising and while they may serve a similar purpose, promoting a new book say, could also serve other ends: for example, enhancing the prestige of a politician by promoting a speech or pressing his popularity.

In undertaking this analysis it has proved hard not to follow Walker's method, especially in that the categories employed are quite simplistic. The contents of these is not always straightforward or self-evident. 'Medical' advertising includes not only the patent medicines of the day that are so notorious in the history of advertising, but also medical technology, such as false teeth. This category also includes beauty products offered to readers

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[27] Black, English press in the eighteenth century, p. 27; Harris, London newspapers, p. 59.

and advertised as being beneficial not only to one's outward appearance, but also one's health. This category then includes all goods sold that are designed to improve the user's body, either internally or externally. Of course, there are great differences between patent medicines and beauty products, most obviously concerning questions of gender. These differences are addressed below.

'Books' refers to all advertising taken out on behalf of the book trade, not only announcements of recently published books (although such advertisements form the vast bulk of the category). Also included are notices of books to be published by subscription and the occasional notices of printing offices looking for work from private authors and publishers.

There are two more categories devoted to buying and selling. 'Property' refers to housing, business premises, and land. It includes all such properties regardless of what terms they may be offered, whether for sale or to let. The other commercial category, 'For sale', covers a multitude of goods and services. This category thus includes wholesale goods, such as the milled lead proffered to tradesmen, retail goods, such as wine or birds, or professional services, such as those advertisers who would teach shorthand or accountancy.

The final two categories do not deal as such with commercial activity. 'Crime' advertising includes all notices for stolen (or 'lost') property. It also includes requests for information about criminals. It does not include, however, such offences as the absconding of apprentices, the desertion of soldiers, or the elopement of wives. These are included in the final category,

the unfortunately but necessarily vague 'Other notices'. Not only are such personal announcements included here, but also notices inserted by the state, or bodies of the state, such as the Victualling Office, and by other corporations, such as insurance companies. These advertisements are varied then, but can be defined by being primarily a means to inform, rather than to sell.

There remains one slight problem, especially connected to the first two categories, 'medicine' and 'books', and relates to the way medical advertisements used books in their publicity strategy. For instance, one well-known medicine of the day, the 'anodyne necklace' (a pacifier for teething children) used the promise of a free book to promote itself: it was the contents of the book that were publicised, not just the medicine itself. Such advertisements as these have been included under 'medicine', as it remains the medical good that is being sold, rather than the book, which was received gratis. In another instance, a series of advertisements were placed in the *Journal* for books on medical matters, which were sold not through booksellers but through shops supplying the medicines promoted in the books. Although these advertisements were not placed in the newspaper directly by members of the book trade, as it remains the book that is the object for sale the advertisement has been counted under 'books'.

Table 1. Number of advertisements by type, 1717-1733

	1717	*1721*	*1725*	*1729*	*1733*
Medicine	152	277	266	211	198
Books	99	63	157	189	264
Property	6	13	23	30	12
For sale	13	106	81	48	62
Crime	8	15	31	21	6
Other	40	27	57	57	44
Total	318	501	615	556	586

Fig. 3 Advertising by type, 1717-1737

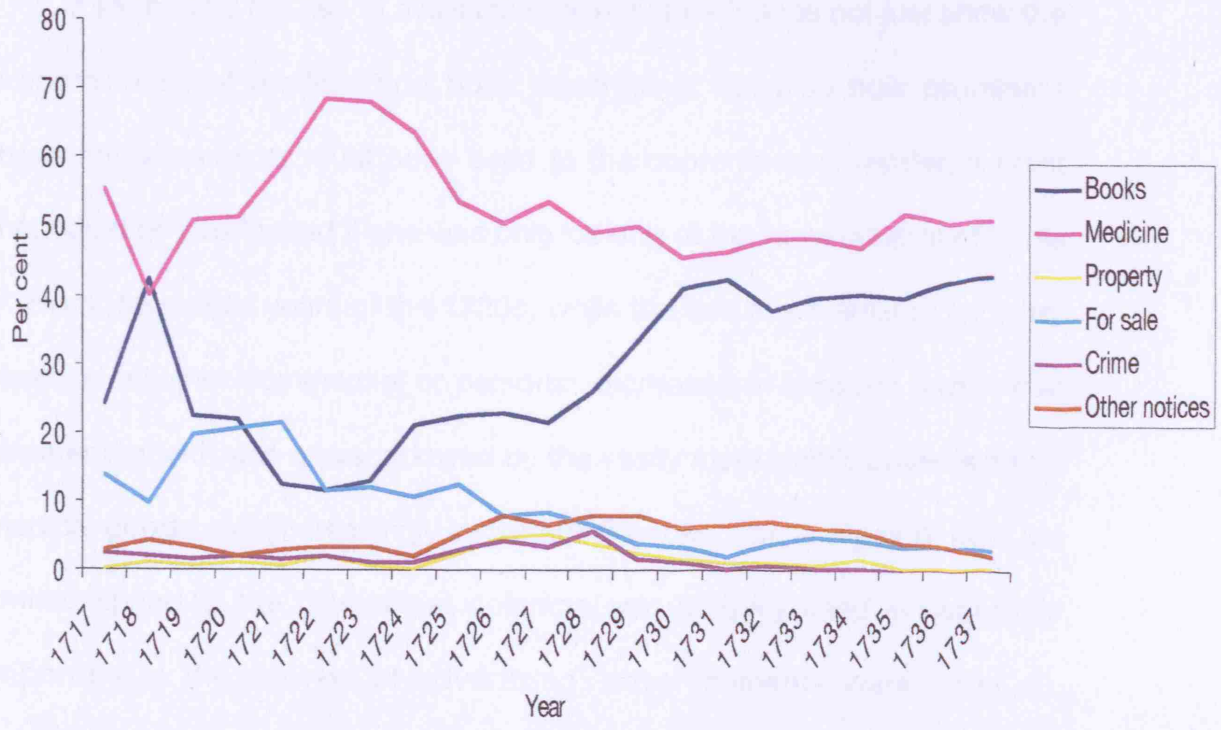

Table 1 shows quite clearly the way in which the advertisements featuring in the newspaper were primarily for two consumer goods, books and medicines – 1,876 of the total 2,576 advertisements in the sample, or 73 per cent. These are absolute figures though, representing only the number of individual advertisements. By way of comparison, Figure 3 shows how common these sorts of advertising were in another manner, by the amount of available advertising space taken up by each type. The methodology and reasoning behind Figure 3 is similar to that behind Figure 1 – averages were made of the number of lines per issue taken up by the various categories. These were then calculated as percentages of the average total advertising space.

In examining the use of available space, Figure 3 does not just show the predominance of medical and book advertising, but also how prominent these advertisements must have been to the contemporary reader, a point that could be overlooked if one was only looking at the raw statistics of Table 1. From the middle years of the 1720s, while the use of advertising for other reasons, whether commercial or personal, increased in absolute terms, that apparent growth was overshadowed by the vastly more visible advertising for medical goods and (increasingly importantly) books. The analysis of how the limited space of the newspaper columns was actually used is especially important in the context of advertising: advertisements were, after all, charged for on the basis of length. Figure 3 therefore shows what sectors of commercial society were most important to Nathaniel Mist as a printer, how

important these types of advertising were to the newspapers, and how relatively trivial, perhaps underdeveloped, other forms of advertising were. The rest of this chapter examines these different types of advertising. However it focuses on – and begins with – the two primary sectors of newspaper advertising.

Medical advertisements

Most advertisers appealed to Mist's readers' sense of physical ailing. The medical advertisements were an integral part of the quack medicine of the time. Quacks were, in the words of Roy Porter,

> those seeking custom from the anonymous consumer – the faceless crowd, the nameless reader – through the media of advertising, publicity and the sale of standardized commodities. In professional terms, they were the wild men of the trade; in entrepreneurial terms, they were its frontiersmen.[28]

While the newspaper press was not the sole fiefdom of the quack – Helen Dingwall has discussed how the press could 'inform the student and the general public' of the progress of medical knowledge as well as 'bring out the unscrupulous' – the relationship between quack advertising and newspapers was a strong and, following Porter, defining one.[29] The medicines they offered ranged from panaceas such as 'the best water in the world' to a variety of cures for specific illnesses. One should not be tempted though to use the frequency of advertisements relating to particular ailments

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[28] R. Porter, Quacks: fakers and charlatans in English medicine (Stroud, 2000), p. 30.

[29] H.M. Dingwall, '"To be insert in the *Mercury*: medical practitioners and the press in eighteenth-century Edinburgh', Social History of Medicine 13:1 (2000), p. 44; Porter, Quacks, pp. 109-14.

as a means to judge the prevalence of those illnesses. It would be easy to imagine, though not without some great disquiet, that the readers of the *Weekly Journal* spent most of their time, when not contracting it, fretting about the 'secret disease'. 'Chymical lotions', 'royal specificks', 'Italian boluses' – all promised a cure for venereal disease, all regularly littered the back pages of the newspapers. The disease itself may have been secret, but its symptoms and treatments were kept firmly in the public gaze. One advertisement, for 'Wright's Diuretick, or Cleansing Tincture', is typical of the tone:

> [The cure] Urinally discharges all the Fæces, or putrid Relicks of the Lues Alamode, or Venereal Infection, and chases its Concomitants, the wretched Train of that complicated Distemper, and carries off all mucous, filthy, sanious Matter lodg'd in the Reins and elsewhere, by ill Cures ... an equal success in either Sex ... To be had of Dr Wright at his Home the Golden Head in Bell-Savage Yard on Ludgate Hill. Ten shillings per bottle, with directions in its use.[30]

The publicity given to the symptoms, the lengthy description lavished upon them, is in contrast to any desire of the sufferers for privacy in their treatment. There was a shame of suffering from venereal disease (one self-help book, repeatedly advertised in the papers, the *Short account of the venereal disease* came with 'proper Admonitions to such as do, or may labour under this misfortune'). This encouraged new cures that could protect the patient from the notorious, stigmatising side effects of mercury based treatments, such as those hawked by Dr Wright.[31] Promises of discretion, if

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[30] Weekly Journal, 31 October 1719 (among others).
[31] K.P. Siena, 'The "foul disease" and privacy: the effects of venereal disease and patient demand on the medical marketplace in early modern London', Bulletin of the History of Medicine 75:2 (2001), p. 208.

not discreet prose, became increasingly important to the language of advertising.[32]

All advertising relied on trust: the book 'just published' actually was as it was described, one volume octavo, two volume folio, against the Arians, in praise of the Church. Medical advertising not only had to inspire trust that their pills, boluses, specificks, and tinctures existed – they also had to be convincing as cures. Kevin Siena muses that 'one can only speculate about the honesty of some of the other anonymous practitioners ... who claimed to treat members of the royal family', but such a declaration was a commonplace.[33] Pertinently, such claims were tailored. While royal connections were certainly proclaimed, those who advertised in Mist's journals did not refer to the present occupants of the throne, but were far prouder of their links to Stuart courts, either for direct employment or through more circuitous routes:

> By this Optick Secret, a Lady 15 Years blind, and several Persons of Distinction, two of them blind from their Birth, were brought to Sight to the Royal Satisfaction of K. Charles and K. James II. and also to her late Majesty Queen Anne...[34]

No doubt advertisers considered that many of Mist's readers would have been reluctant to give their money to those ensuring the health and vitality of the Hanoverian court. In contrast, physicians in the *London Journal* were proud to stress links to the current occupants of the British crown. Other means of drumming up business stressed the marvellous cures resulting from treatment. The personal testimony of the successfully cured

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[32] Siena, 'The "foul disease" and privacy', p. 214.
[33] Siena, 'The "foul disease" and privacy', p. 202.
[34] Weekly Journal, 19 November 1720.

was also employed. Lisa Cody has noted that 'in an appeal to an audience ...disinclined to consult a physician or surgeon and thus craving *anonymity*, the quack ad publicly invoked fellow (private) sufferers who in their specificity and authentic individuality could guarantee the efficacy of the cure and anonymous transaction'.[35] Whether this actually amounts to a 'paradox', as Cody insists, is questionable. The technique was, however, a familiar one. One woman advertiser, who regularly sought to bring to public attention her considerable skill in treating blindness, had many a customer wishing to express his or her gratitude. Invitations to come and witness the newly healed were common, although perhaps the generous offer of several sufferers to exhibit themselves before their cure in a public treatment, so that others could 'be convinced to their great Astonishment', was unusually open.[36] A series of advertisements the next month completed one tale:

> These are to give notice to all Gentlemen that were pleased ... to see the deplorable Condition I was then in; that now, thanks to the Almighty I am already restored to a perfect State of Health, under God, by that excellent Physician the Author of the Royal Specifick, whose Dose is only one Grain for the secret Disease, &c. In acknowledgement of which, I again invite all those Gentlemen, and others, that shall think fit to call upon me ... Will. Archer.[37]

The testimonies are considered today to have been shams, given in return for refunded money when the cure failed.[38] It is not so certain that

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[35] L.F. Cody, '"No cure, no money", or the invisible hand of quackery: the language of commerce, credit, and cash in eighteenth-century British medical advertisements', Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 28 (1999), p. 109. (Emphasis as in original.) Cody's wider argument, that the advertisements 'and the medical commerce they facilitated ... enabled the financial and economic revolution' (p. 104), is somewhat stretched.
[36] Weekly Journal, 19 March 1720.
[37] Weekly Journal, 16 April 1720.
[38] Cody, '"No cure, no money"', p. 123.

newspaper readers at the time would have considered them so sceptically. Not all of Mist's readers were so confident in the efficacy of the medical wares being touted in his paper. One correspondent, 'Philygeia', was particularly scathing. Porter briefly noted this letter, a lengthy one, as it refers to the hugely increased audience – and market – for quack cures afforded by the press.[39] However, the letter is placed in a wider context, examining questions of probity in newspapers:

> You [Mr Mist] generally begin your Journal with disabusing the Publick, pointing out the Lies, and rectifying the Errors of your Brother Newsmongers; and yet, e'er you leave your Reader, you never fail to send him to ten or a dozen Places, where he is sure of being abused and imposed on the grossest Manner. The last page of your Paper never misses of having as many Lies in it as all the rest have Truths; and I am perswaded you cannot do so much Good by the one as you do Harm by the other.[40]

Mist's honesty, that had been made so manifest in his uncovering of the lies and deceptions practised by Whig newspapers and that he traded upon so heavily in the promotion of his *Journal*, had been abused by the quacks. 'The want of Vertue in the Medicine, and of Merit in the Preparer,' he wrote, 'they think will be abundantly supplied by Mr Mist's Publishing the Praises of them both'.[41] In Philygeia's view, the hyperbole employed by the quacks was as damaging to the creditability of newspapers as the distortions of those who tailored the news according to party need. Indeed, such techniques were worse as 'if I had an Ounce of Dr. *Wright*'s Mercury in my Glands, I should be more affected, than if the *East India Company* were fallen

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[39] Porter, Quacks, p. 111.
[40] Weekly Journal, 31 October 1719.
[41] Weekly Journal, 31 October 1719.

13 per Cent'.[42] Philygeia's letter suggests that – at least to an observer such as himself – not all Mist's readership (or the readership of any newspaper for that matter) possessed sufficient discernment to make out differences in authority and probity between editorial matter and commercial advertising. This issue of is vital to understanding more fully how the early newspaper was read and used by its readers. In the need for trust, newspaper advertising was sharing and reflecting the needs of the medium that carried it. The newspaper was one of

> the sectors of printed literature that most depended on being credited by readers. But they were also the sectors whose credit was most suspect. These were therefore the genres that first developed rhetorical procedures to project authenticity in the domains of print to the highest degree.[43]

The 'rhetorical procedures' of both quack advertising and news reporting owe much to each other. Claims to exclusive knowledge, attacks on the reputations of competitors and one's own honesty and rectitude were common to both the news columns and the back pages. Perhaps Philygeia's fears for readers more naïve than him were in some small way justified. His pleas for Mr Mist to expel the quacks were never acted on, but Mist would hardly be the last newspaperman to be guided by advertising revenue.

Publicising the book trade

The language of book advertisements in the newspapers of the early eighteenth century rarely strayed beyond a simple annunciation of books

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[42] Weekly Journal, 31 October 1719.
[43] A. Johns, The nature of the book: print and knowledge in the making (Chicago, 1998), p. 174.

'just published'. The advertisements contained little polemical rhetoric, crying up the qualities of the work (or indeed the author), but rather were in the language of title pages – themselves originally advertisements for display in bookshop windows. To this would be added other information – physical descriptions of the books, prices, the address of the printer – in order 'to convince far-flung newspaper readers to place an order from a distance'.[44] The advertising of books in this manner however predated the newspaper; advertising as a means of funding increasing book production was in many ways a response to the decline in literary patronage that had begun in the late sixteenth century.[45] Newspaper adverts were a markedly more efficient form of publicising new books, targeting a literate audience. The right books could also be offered to the right audience.

To illustrate these points one can examine the book advertisements published during one year, 1728. Unlike other papers of the eighteenth century, Mist's newspapers do not seem to have been owned by a conglomeration of booksellers, or 'congers'.[46] However, a wide range of books was advertised from a variety of booksellers. Figure 4, below, shows the division of books by genre, and includes comparable figures for another Saturday paper, the ministry-owned *London Journal*.[47] As can be seen, the two newspapers ran a similar number of book advertisements in total over

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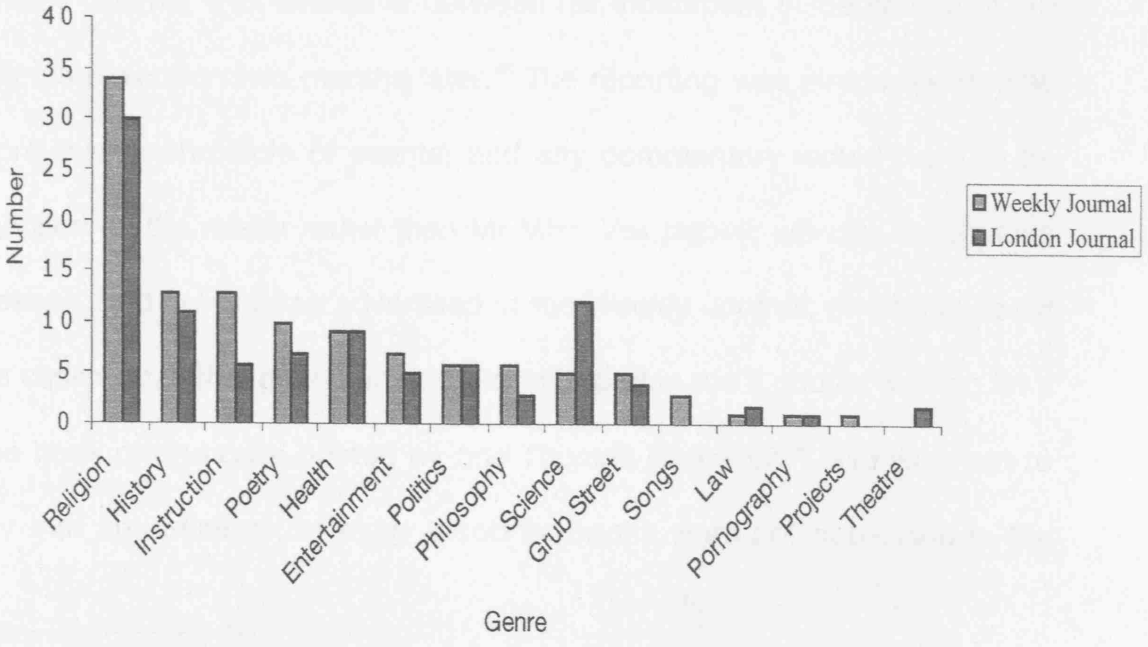
[44] C. Ferdinand, 'Constructing the frameworks of desire: how newspapers sold books in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in Raymond, News, newspapers, and society, p. 163.
[45] P.J. Voss, 'Books for sale: advertising and patronage in late Elizabethan England', Sixteenth Century Journal 29:3 (1998), pp. 733-4.
[46] Harris, London newspapers, pp. 65-81.
[47] While most categories of genre in Figure 4 are self-explanatory, 'Grub Street' refers to books about aspects of the book trade.

the course of the year, with the *London Journal* running slightly fewer: 106 to the *Weekly Journal*'s 126. The comparison also demonstrates that there was an essentially similar generic profile to the advertising in both newspapers.

However, attention might be drawn to the greater number of advertisements for history, poetry, didactic works of instruction, and entertainments (fictional works in prose and including, but not limited to, novels) in Mist's papers and the greater number of scientific works, especially of a Newtonian nature, in the *London Journal*. This could be another sign of Mist's supposedly 'downmarket' audience. Other differences are also hidden: it is not simply a matter of both newspapers running the same advertisements.

Fig. 4 Book advertisements by genre, 1728



The newspapers of Nathaniel Mist abounded with books that were obviously designed to appeal to those of a certain political bent. Political defences of the Church of England and attacks on latitudinarians and the heterodox were common, as were works of a devotional nature, at a time when theology was essential to politics. One could even purchase small pictures of the early Stuart kings to bind into the Book of Common Prayer. Works that were obviously direct criticisms of the ministry of the day were rarer. The 'London' articles often emphasised the hazardous nature of writing, printing, selling, or even possessing, those pamphlets that reflected highly on the ministry.

Stories of such prosecutions, of houses being searched by the messengers of the Secretaries of State, were popular stuff for Mist's writers. Most notorious was the arrest, trial, and execution of John Matthews, printer of the Jacobite pamphlet *Vox populi, vox dei* (1719). The coverage in the *Weekly Journal* was extensive between his indictment in September 1719 and his execution two months later.[48] The reporting was circumspect, little more than a chronicle of events, and any commentary would have to be supplied by the reader rather than Mr Mist. *Vox populi, vox dei*, for obvious reasons, had never been advertised in the *Weekly Journal*; one book about the case was, although that in the form of a puff in the 'London' section for a free book on the case printed by one Thomas Bickerton.[49] All this is not to say that anti-ministry, or even Jacobite, books were not publicised in the

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[48] Weekly Journal, 12 September 1719; 17 October 1719; 24 October 1719; 31 October 1719; 7 November 1719; 14 November 1719.
[49] Weekly Journal, 14 November, 1719.

newspapers, but mainly such as those that presented themselves as attacks on the culture of luxury, or bubbles, or certain members of the clergy. It was better to attack the Bishop of Bangor than the ministry directly.

Other books, beyond political and religious disputes, published and advertised can help to lead the historian beyond the newspaper to the reader. However, not all the books advertised were to the taste of all of Mr Mist's correspondents. One advertisement in particular illustrates the intimate links between the newspaper, the book trade and print culture on Grub Street:

> EUNUCHISM display'd. Describing all the different Sorts of Eunuchs, the Esteem they have met with in the World, and how they came to be made so. Wherein principally examined whether they are capable of Marriage, and if they ought to be suffer'd into that State. Written by a Person of Honour, on Occasion of a young Lady's being decoy'd into an Amour with Signor Niccolini, who sung in the Opera at the Hay-market, and to whom she would have liked to have been married ... Price 12 s. 6 d.[50]

This had been presumably placed in the journal and paid for by Edmund Curll, printer of *Eunuchism display'd* and a bookseller with a reputation for scandal and for pirating the works of others. It was the catalyst for a furious attack on Curll on the front page of the paper, in a letter some have attributed to Daniel Defoe.[51] The books the man produced were '*printed Bestiality*', 'Curlicism' was a sin, 'the Sodomy of the Pen', and their very existence an affront to good tory sensibilities, as things never known before the 'Restoration of the Whigs' and the 'Reign of K. George'.[52] The legitimacy

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[50] Weekly Journal, 22 February, 1718.
[51] R. Strauss, The unspeakable Curll: being some account of Edmund Curll, bookseller; to which is added a full list of his books (London, 1927), p. 79.
[52] Weekly Journal, 5 April 1718.

of the relationship between books, newspapers and the state, brought together through the advertisement, is also questioned:

> How can our Stamp Office take 12 Pence a piece for the Advertisement of his infamous Books, publishing the continual Encrease of lewd abominable Pieces of Bawdy, such as none can read even in Miniature (for such an Advertisement is to a Book.)[53]

Book advertisements were, in the view of the letter-writer, subject to the same moral considerations as the book that they represented. They do not only allow the reader to picture the physical form, but also its ethical quality. A rather backhanded defence of Curll that appeared in the next issue, asking why one should treat a bookseller different from any other tradesman and pointing out that one can buy carrion as well as good meat from a butcher, returned to this questionable relationship between newspapers and advertising. Mr Mist, he suggested, 'may be cautious of affronting the Booksellers, because you live by them'.[54] To a certain extent, this must have been true. Booksellers, including Nathaniel Mist himself, owned newspapers as a means to further their own commercial success. The advertising of books was just as important as the communication of news.

Promoting commerce

Medicines and books were the mainstays of the *Weekly Journal*'s advertising revenue. Other commercial advertisers were more circumspect in their use of the press. Most of these advertisements were not, however, for the new consumer goods, but more likely supplies for tradesmen or for

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[53] Weekly Journal, 5 April 1718.
[54] Weekly Journal, 12 April 1718.

warehouse sales. This would again suggest that Mist's readers hailed from a part of the social scale not generally associated with newspaper reading. However, one must bear in mind that there were different advertising strategies for different sorts of goods and announcements in the press of a particular shopkeeper moving premises could be taken as a way of announcing their goods and services, while avoiding any indecorous suggestions of trade:

> John Bell and Company Mercers, remov'd from the Bell and Anchor in the outward Walk in the New Exchange, to the Bell and Crown at the East End of the inward Walk over-against the great Door next the City; where are sold all Sorts of fine Silks, Callicoes Morning Gowns, Quilted Petticoats, &c.[55]

However, in this particular case, the advertisement reveals more about the nature of eighteenth century advertising. Subsequent issues of the *Weekly Journal* carried a related advertisement:

> Whereas John Bell, Barnabas Brown, and Dellapoole Corbet, Mercers, who had been Copartners together at the Bell and Anchor in the outward Walk of the New Exchange 17 Years upwards, are lately parted, and the said John Bell hath insinuated in this and other Papers, the said John Bell and Company are removed from the said Bell and Anchor to another Shop: These are to give Notice, that the said Barnabas Brown is not removed from the said Bell and Anchor, but still continues there, and sells all sorts of Mercery Goods as usual.[56]

Newspaper advertisements could then be rather pugilistic; a more common kind of this sort adversarial advertising is the dispute over exclusivity, as was the case when readers of the newspaper were offered two varieties of a particular beauty product, the so-called 'royal chymical washball':

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[55] Weekly Journal, 12 September 1719.
[56] Weekly Journal, 3 October 1719.

> This is to give Notice, that the Royal Chymical Wash-balls for the Hands and Face, are removed from Mr Lambert's the Glovers, to prevent the Publick's being imposed on by Counterfeits and are now sold only at Mr Allcroft's Toy-Shop ... and at Mrs Giles's, Milliner... Price 1s. each, and no where else in London by Retail, therefore beware of Counterfeits, which are not only ineffectual, but may also prove dangerous.

While on the next page, the reader was confronted by an alternative proprietorial claim:

> To prevent the publick's being imposed on by Counterfeits,
> The true royal chymical Wash ball for the beautifying the Hands and Face ... has been sold above eight Years by Mr Lambert, Gloveseller ... Price 1s. each and Allowance by the dozen.[57]

Relationships between commercial advertisers were not always adversarial. The advertising columns of the *Weekly Journal* also allowed for collective action between individual traders. Newspapers could thus be used as a means of regulating commerce. This was especially true of those involved in textiles. Here was a sector of the economy where concern over the debilitating effects of consumption on national virtue was at its most voluble – Mist's newspapers were themselves a part of this controversy over changing fashions and mores.[58] It was also one of the few areas of the economy where there was government intervention in new patterns of consumption, for example a ban on foreign silks from Asia, which was then publicised by the domestic manufacturers concerned in the prohibition's success:

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[57] Weekly Journal, 9 May 1719.

[58] T. Keirn, 'Parliament, legislation and the regulation of English textile industries, 1689-1714', in L. Davison, *et al* (eds), Stilling the grumbling hive: the response to social and economic problems in England, 1689-1750 (Stroud, 1992), pp. 1-24. For a further consideration of this aspect of Mist's papers' politics, see chapter 7 below.

> Whereas the frequent Use and Wear of wrought Silks, Bengalls, and Stuffs mixed with Silk or Herba of the Manufacture of Persia, China and East India, in Apparel and Furniture, in Contempt of, and Opposition to an Act ... induced the Manufacturers some time since to advertise in the publick Prints ... whereas not only the Use and Wear of the said prohibited Goods were frequently after that time continued, notwithstanding those Advertisements by the Manufacturers, and in Defiance of the most obvious Sense of the said Act (about that time reprinted in the London Gazettes) These are therefore to give Notice, That the Manufacturers have since been obliged ... to cause great Quantities of the said prohibited Goods ... to be seized, condemned, and sold at the Custom-House for Exportation ... of which all Persons concern'd are again desired to take Notice, the same Provision being still continued for effectually suppressing or punishing the unlawful Use or Wear of the said prohibited wrought Silks.[59]

Thus not only was the statutory ban publicised again (repeating the original, official, publicity that had already appeared in the columns of the *London Gazette*), also brought to the attention of the newspaper-reading public were the efforts of the manufacturers to enforce and regulate the ban. The importance of this publicity should be emphasised. Another similar advertisement, regarding regulation of button holes, makes clear the link between publicity and enforcement, the advertisers' purpose being quite clear: '[t]his Notice is published to prevent any Person pleading Ignorance, or being unwarily drawn into offend against the said Act'.[60] Commercial advertising was not then solely a matter of letting the new consumers know what exciting opportunities they had to spend their money.

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[59] Mist's Weekly Journal, 21 September 1723
[60] Mist's Weekly Journal, 28 July 1722.

Public announcements

Newspapers could also act as public spaces. Not every advertiser in the *Weekly Journal* had something to hawk. The newspaper could be used for public announcements, a means for the communication of information between readers, although this particular type of newspaper advertisement has been little considered by historians.[61] It is impossible to categorise such advertisements by what information they contained – there are simply too many variants for such a categorisation to be useful – but one can distinguish them by the type of publicity they were employing and who exactly were involved in the advertisement. Three types can be identified: announcements placed in the newspapers by various institutions of the state (the recurring announcements, for example, regarding the official regulation of hawkers); announcements from private individuals to the newspaper-reading public; and announcements from private individuals to other, specific, private individuals.

The last of these types was also by far the rarest. The most obvious example of this type of advertisement is the appeal for named persons to come forward, so that they might learn something to their advantage. Another example would be a gentleman from the American colonies who advertised for news from his relatives.[62] Such advertisements sometimes tended towards the cryptic, which suggests the use of newspaper columns to carry ciphered messages, although often this might reflect the desire of

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[61] D.T. Andrew, 'The press and public apologies in eighteenth-century London', in N. Landau (ed.), Law, crime and English society, 1660-1830 (Cambridge, 2002), p. 209.
[62] Fog's Weekly Journal, 20 September 1729.

the historian to impose meaning on what are otherwise irrecoverable intentions. One example of this type of advertisement illustrates the problems one faces:

> Whereas lately a little Man stray'd from a Gentleman's House in the Country, in a very abrupt Manner, and carried off with him the Hearts of some young Virgins; they fear he was not in earnest when he made an Offer of his to them; he having since been seen upon the London Road going to a wicked Woman, as they suppose. This is to certify if he will bring them his Heart again, he shall be kindly received, and no Questions ask'd; or if any Body can give any Tidings of him to the said Ladies, at an eminent Person's near St John's College in Oxford, they shall receive a suitable Reward.[63]

This is clearly an advertisement that would have had a distinct meaning for those involved in it, although that meaning would have been unclear to other contemporary readers, even if they could make guesses, whether educated or not. While, with a little imagination, this advertisement can bear other readings – especially if one is looking for evidence of Jacobite activity – it is wiser for the historian in the absence of any other evidence to take this at face value. However, it does make clear the way that newspapers were used as a public medium for private correspondence.

Many more private announcements were aimed not at individuals who may happen to be reading, but instead at the reading public at large. Often these revolved around criminal activity.[64] Perhaps this should not be a

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[63] Mist's Weekly Journal, 6 November 1725.

[64] Much recent work has been done on the history of crime in eighteenth-century Britain, including the magisterial J.M. Beattie, Crime and the courts in England, 1660-1800 (Oxford, 1986), recently augmented by the same author's Policing and punishment in London, 1660-1750: urban crime and the limits of terror (Oxford, 2001). Other academic trends in this subject are surveyed by J. Innes & J. Styles, 'The crime wave: recent writings on crime and criminal justice in eighteenth-century England', in A. Wilson (ed.),

surprise. This was an age where the links between publicity and awareness (exaggerated or not) of criminal activity was strong. The vast majority of such notices concerned theft of moveable property, especially horses – although there are a few exceptional advertisements for more serious crimes, such as the murder of a British army officer in Inverness.[65] In a criminal system where burdens of investigating crime and bringing criminals to trial ordinarily devolved upon the victim of the crime, such notices seemed to have been an efficient means towards redress. Very often these advertisements did not seek to catch a thief, but were instead aimed at the restitution of the missing property and 'no questions asked'.[66]

Donna Andrew has recently studied the use of private announcements in newspapers to apologise for offences, in order to avoid prosecution.[67] Her examination concentrates on newspaper evidence from the period 1740-1790. It appears from a study of the pages of the *Weekly Journal* that this had not yet been established as a method of negotiating criminal behaviour in the early parts of the century. While such apologies do occur, only two occur within my sample: one for a false accusation of sodomy and another for a libellous book.[68] Alternative uses of newspaper advertising for purposes related to crime beyond property offences were rare, but include public

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Rethinking social history: English society 1570-1920 and its interpretation (Manchester, 1993), pp. 201-65.

[65] Mist's Weekly Journal, 19 November 1726.

[66] J. Styles, 'Print and policing: crime advertising in eighteenth-century provincial England', in D. Hay & F. Snyder (eds), Policing and prosecution in Britain 1750-1850 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 55-112.

[67] Andrew, 'The press and public apologies', pp. 208-27.

[68] Mist's Weekly Journal, 16 March 1728; Fog's Weekly Journal, 19 October 1728.

warnings – either of individuals (an ex-servant of the Duke of Buckingham, for example) or of groups (such as a 'gypsy gang');[69] and public denials of guilt (one man rebuffing accusations that he murdered his wife).[70] Again, these examples from the sample stand out because of their rarity.

Far more commonly, though not considered here as crimes, other forms of correct behaviour could be policed through private notices in the London newspapers. The abscondment of individuals from legally binding contracts – matrimonial as well as commercial – was one such phenomenon. Husbands protected themselves from debts incurred by eloped wives, assuring readers they would not consider themselves responsible for any such monies. Apprentices who absented themselves from their masters' households were publicised. The state also employed similar notices, for those who had deserted the ranks.

Conclusion

Advertising in newspapers was hardly an innovation of the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist. It is important though that these little notices are given their due as an integral part of the newspaper. One of the great frustrations of writing about the newspapers of this period is the lack of financial records. We know very little of how newspapers financed themselves, let alone how much they charged for advertisements. Attempts to extrapolate from what other newspapers did are generally unsatisfactory

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[69] Mist's Weekly Journal, 1 May 1725; 12 March 1726.
[70] Mist's Weekly Journal, 31 August 1728.

and assume uniform business practices in a diverse and, in many ways, still experimental industry.

Advertisements can though show us something of the links between newspapers and the wider commercial society of eighteenth-century Britain. While it is not revelatory that newspapers depended on regular advertising, especially from the book trade and suppliers of patent medicines, previous analyses of advertising content, by either concentrating only on the number of advertisements or (entirely conversely) by neglecting statistical analysis all together, have not been able to show just how prominent to newspaper readers such advertising was.

Newspaper readers are also the other main concern of studying early advertisements. The newspaper readers have themselves been read, their place in society co-ordinated by consumption. Such efforts should, however, be treated with some caution. The predominance of medical advertisements does not necessarily directly lead one to a 'working class' audience. Such advertisements were common. The range of commercial goods advertised was limited, but nor should this directly link Mist's newspapers to a downmarket readership. Many consumer goods were not advertised through any newspaper in this period – though they may have had a presence in print culture through handbills – and their absence is not unique to the *Weekly Journal*. In trying to reconstruct readerships through advertising, we have to bear in mind the strategies of the advertisers. Some may have seen no benefit in any sort of newspaper advertisement, deciding there were other, perhaps seemlier, ways of promoting their goods among the middling sorts

than through the columns of a paper. None of this is to say that newspaper advertisers did not try to imagine how readers would react to their notices, but rather that their efforts (especially those of the booksellers) may have been tailored along political divides as well as social.

Chapter 2

'The Freshest Advices Foreign and Domestick': reporting the news in the *Weekly Journal*[1]

Introduction

In the commercial society of the eighteenth century, news was a singularly desirable commodity. Indeed, to many contemporaries the appetite for news was one that was easily over-indulged. The image of Addison's political upholsterer, 'the greatest Newsmonger in our Quarter', was a familiar one; the poor Quidnunc of a later play named for the *Tatler* caricature was a man easily recognisable to the audience.[2] The desire for news has traditionally been seen as provoked by the commercial necessities of the day and the widening of political awareness. This is especially important for a historiography of the period that explicitly ties together the consumption of news with the development of an essentially capitalist middle class alongside a 'public sphere'. Such motivation was no doubt central (although simple entertainment, in an age that delighted in 'novelty', was no doubt an attraction to this inherently transient genre).

Any study of any newspaper has to deal with this subject, not least because news defines the subject: it is easy to recognise a newspaper – it has news in it. Things happen to people, they are publicised, and they

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[1] The claim that the newspaper came 'with the Freshest Advices Foreign and Domestick' was made every week on the masthead of the *Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post*, 1716-25.

[2] The Tatler, ed. D.F. Bond (3 vols, Oxford, 1987), II, p. 369; A. Murray, The upholsterer, or what news? (London, 1758).

become news. It is this moment of publication that transforms an event into news, a phenomenon 'defined by its transmission, by the act of communication in a given context'.[3] This chapter is not merely concerned with the particular events that form the subject matter of the news, not just the facts behind the narratives of errant ministers, foreign disputes, stock prices and criminal proceedings that Mist's newspapers serialised. Joad Raymond's comment on the newsbooks of the seventeenth century is equally relevant to the newspapers of the eighteenth: they 'are not simply historical documents the value of which is proportional to the degree of truth they contain; rather they are literary texts, which can provide historical information'.[4] As news 'is never unmediated, but always passed on via a particular medium, with its own ideological weighting, in a context which must be reconstructed', this chapter is concerned primarily with context rather than content.[5] It will analyse the news coverage of Mist's newspapers: their journalistic methods, the provenance of the news, and what their reporting was supposed to achieve. To examine the news publicised by a particular paper it is essential to examine first the news culture of the early modern period and the eighteenth century in particular. The chapter then moves on to analyse what types of news the *Journal* carried and, in turn, to discuss news from London, the regions of Britain, and overseas. Each of these discussions address certain issues related to the newspapers' news coverage.

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[3] J. Raymond, The invention of the newspaper: English newsbooks 1641-1649 (Oxford, 1996), p. 88.
[4] Raymond, The invention of the newspaper, p. 2.
[5] Raymond, The invention of the newspaper, p. 88.

What (was) news? Periodicity and accuracy; public events and daily history

In some ways all societies possess a news culture.[6] To say that there was something distinctive of the news culture of the eighteenth century is not therefore to say that its distinctiveness resided in its novelty. News is obviously older than newspapers. It is also older than newsbooks, pamphlets, corantos, and all such printed ephemera. There was a news culture that expressed itself through word and song, gossip and ballads; if part of the early modern state's dislike for vagrants was their worrisome habit of spreading news on their travels, as has been suggested by Adam Fox, then the genealogy of journalism has an even lower pedigree than many might suspect.[7] Travellers and hawkers were reporters and publishers.[8] This oral news culture did not disintegrate with the arrival of the printing press and the new medium; it was remarkably persistent.[9] (It is possible to suggest that the literary style of Mist's newspapers – informal, personal – was a deliberate attempt to recapture the trust that such an oral news culture depended on.)

It is also worthwhile pointing out that news was also transmitted still by hand in manuscript form, although this has not been so well documented

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[6] The point is made in C. Lévy Strauss, Structural anthropology, trans. C. Jackson & B. Grundfest Schoepf (London, 1968), I, p. 296; only M. Stephens, A history of the news from the drum to the satellite (New York, 1989) makes the attempt of a general history of the phenomenon.

[7] A. Fox, Oral and literate culture in England 1500-1700 (Oxford, 2000), p. 348; M. Bell, 'Sturdy rogues and vagabonds: Restoration control of pedlars and hawkers', in P.C.G. Isaac & R.B. McKay (eds), The mighty engine: the printing press and its impact (Winchester, 2000), pp. 89-96.

[8] Fox, Oral and literate culture, p. 342.

[9] S.A. Baron, 'The guises of dissemination in early modern England: news in manuscript and print', in B. Dooley & S.A. Baron (eds), The politics of information in early modern Europe, (London & New York, 2001), p. 50.

by historians.[10] An example of this can be supplied by Mist himself. A notable absence, to modern eyes, in early eighteenth-century newspapers is any reporting of Parliament. Both Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled were wary of any reporting of their actions: the Commons warned news writers in 1696, soon after the lapsing of the Licensing Act, not to 'presume to intermeddle with the Debates, or any other Proceedings of this House' and were soon followed by the peers who in 1699 resolved that 'it is a Breach of the Privilege of this House, for any Person whatsoever to print, or publish in Print, any Thing relating to the Proceedings of this House, without the Leave of this House'.[11] Breach of privilege could be dealt with summarily and strictly.[12] Mist's papers were thus mute on the matter of parliamentary debates.[13] Yet it was possible to get accurate news of parliamentary debates.

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[10] For scribal publication in the earlier period, see H. Love, Scribal publication in seventeenth-century England (Oxford, 1993); H. Love, 'Oral and scribal texts in early modern England', in J. Barnard & D.F. Mackenzie (eds), The Cambridge history of the book in Britain, vol. 4: 1557-1695 (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 97-121. For an early modern manuscript news culture, see I. Atherton, '"The itch grown a disease": manuscript transmission of news in the seventeenth century', Prose Studies 21 (1998), pp. 39-65; A. Mousley, 'Self, state and seventeenth century news', The Seventeenth Century 6 (1991), pp. 149-68; G. Schneider, The culture of epistolarity: vernacular letters and letter-writing in early modern England (Newark, 2005), pp. 143-82.

[11] Journals of the House of Commons, 11, p. 439; Journals of the House of Lords, 16, p. 391.

[12] For a discussion of Parliament's continuing censorship role, see chapter 7, below.

[13] Unofficial reports did appear on occasion, for which see M. Ransome, 'The reliability of contemporary reporting of the debates of the House of Commons, 1727-1741', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 19:56 (1942), pp. 67-79; J. Black, 'Parliamentary reporting in England in the early eighteenth century: an abortive attempt to influence the magazines in 1744', Parliaments, Estates and Representation 7 (1987), pp. 61-9. This does not mean, however, that there was a complete absence of parliamentary information in print. The Votes and proceedings of the House of Commons was regularly published from 1680, selling well until the newspapers began

Following his exile to France in 1728, Mist began to commission newsletters detailing the proceedings of Parliament around the time of the Excise Crisis of 1733, which he would then write up in his own hand and transmit to the Jacobite court at Rome.[14] Such news could have a higher value than that in newspapers: as Mist wrote, 'it is the best History of the present Times that possibly can be sought after'.[15] That these letters were a commercial service, provided by a reporter based in the Palace of Westminster, is clear: copies in the hand of another, presumably the original correspondent, are included in the collection; and Mist told of the expense incurred by providing such a service, although as 'they are really both entertaining and useful, I have given him suitable Encouragements and order'd him to spare for no Cost'.[16]

The newspaper was, however, the dominant news medium of the eighteenth century, despite such (meagre) competition. It is thus necessary to place Mist's reporting of the news in his papers in a more specific context: one where news was mediated by the printed word in periodicals recognised by contemporaries (and recognisable to historians) as newspapers. An exact and extensive definition of a newspaper is perhaps not a worthwhile question on which to dwell – it has been and remains a rather fluid genre. The newspaper is hardly unfamiliar to the modern eye, is not an artefact of the

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reporting debates regularly in the latter half of the eighteenth century – see S. Lambert, 'Printing for the House of Commons in the eighteenth century', The Library, 5th series, 23 (1968), pp. 25-30.

[14] Windsor, Royal Archives (R.A.), Stuart Papers 143/187, 151/140, 159/155, 160/1, 160/9, 160/45, 160/72, 160/84, 160/96, 160/129, 161/16, 162/81.

[15] Mist to Edgar, 24 April 1733, R.A., Stuart Papers 161/16.

[16] Mist to Edgar, 8 March 1733, R.A., Stuart Papers, 160/1. This method of reporting Parliament is similar to that employed by Edward Cave for the *Gentleman's Magazine*: Ransome, 'Reliability of contemporary reporting', pp. 71-2.

eighteenth century that has fallen out of common use along with the periwig and the duelling pistol. If one were to name its attributes though, at the very head of the list would be periodicity: a serialisation of information, rendered distinct by its regular publication. C.J. Sommerville has gone so far as to separate the print revolution from a later 'news revolution' of the seventeenth century, emphasising the daily transmission of news.[17] In his opinion, the consumption of daily news, as a regular part of ordinary life, 'produced a revolution of consciousness every bit as important as the introduction of printing'.[18] While it is debatable that Sommerville's claim is sufficiently proven, his point that periodicity was a necessary precondition for a news industry, for the production and consumption of news as a commodity, is certainly valid.[19] Periodicity was also an aspect of an essential part of the rhetoric of newsmongering – accuracy, claims for which had been a constant feature of news reporting since the earliest newsbooks of the mid-seventeenth century.[20] Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the printer Elkanah Settle, of the early newspaper *Publick Occurrences*, touched on the relationship between periodicity and accurate reporting:

> This [*Publick Occurrences*] is only a Weekly Paper, and if our *Athenian* Age will have fresh News every 24 Hours, yet this would be an imperfect *Intelligence*, without *Method*, and unfit to be given

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[17] C. J. Sommerville, The news revolution in England: cultural dynamics of daily information (Oxford, 1986), p. 3.
[18] Sommerville, The news revolution, p. 159. His wider claim has been developed as a starting point for a discussion of the effects of periodical time in the Victorian age: M.W. Turner, 'Periodical time in the nineteenth century', Media History 8 (2002), pp.183-96.
[19] Sommerville, The news revolution, pp. 4, 34-74.
[20] C. Nelson & M. Secombe, 'The creation of the periodical press 1620-1695', in J. Barnard & D.F. McKenzie (eds), The Cambridge history of the book volume IV: 1557-1695 (Cambridge, 2002), p. 540.

> Home-room by Lovers of *History* and *News*, that shall fancy to know even years hence, how Transactions happened successively, during the time of the *Occurrences Observations*; If I should omit any remarkable Passage, because some few very Inquisitive Persons have it at this Juncture fresh upon their Minds by Conversation: (Though possibly, and most probably, falsly Represented, and told Twenty several Ways.) Or should this Paper Publish'd on *Tuesdays*, leave out all remarkable Passages, but what happen the day or two before its Publication; How strangely imperfect would it render the Account of Publick *Occurrences*, which it pretends to Transmit Successively, and to state Truly?[21]

Here Settle directly linked the periodicity of the news to its accurate and truthful representation. Notice the disdain for the oral dissemination of news, which is invariably misrepresentative and – just as bad – not subject to one single and authoritative voice, but rather a multitude of interpretations and representations. It should also be noted that Settle was writing in defence of weekly rather than daily publication. While Sommerville stresses the importance of daily information, news on a weekly basis had to be defended against commercial rivals who specialised in more frequent doses of news.

Nathaniel Mist's manifesto of 1717, written to justify his *Weekly Journal*, made clear his commitment to news reporting. It was an Olympian enterprise, high-minded and decorous. Its cardinal virtues were accuracy and honesty. Mist guaranteed this – at least as far as his newspaper was concerned. Although the newspaper had not yet reached a year of publication, Mist had already been forced onto the defensive against accusations of sedition. (By the legal standards of the day, roughly but

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[21] Quoted in D.F. McKenzie, 'Trading places? England 1689 – France 1789', in H.T. Mason (ed.), The Darnton debate: books and revolution in the eighteenth century (Oxford, 1989), p. 11.

concisely expressed in Lord Chief Justice Holt's dictum that 'if people should not be called to account for possessing the people with an ill opinion of government, no government can exist', the accusations could be justified.[22]) His reply was a front-page declaration of intent. It not only protested that the notoriously Jacobite Mist was loyal to the Hanoverian king and his whig ministers, and sneered at rivals who were motivated only by the basest jealousies of his commercial successes, but concluded with a puff for himself, a ringing endorsement of the news values of the *Weekly Journal*:

> But our Intelligence will be directly from abroad, translated by the ablest Hands, & giving Account of Foreign Affairs, in a manner differing from any weekly Paper now in being, and we hope, shall not only be more pleasing in the Relation, but more to be depended upon also for the Truth of Fact, and perhaps be also earlier supplied than any other Paper.
>
> As to the Home Account of News, as this Paper will be filled with a greater Variety every Day, than any other Paper can be, no Pains, or Cost being spared to gather up every material Passage that Occurs in every Corner of the Town, and from every Part of the two Kingdoms, so we cannot assure our Readers of every Party, that we shall endeavour to observe so exact a Neutrality of Parties, and give such an impartial Account of things, keeping to the Matters of Fact only.[23]

This serves as a fine encapsulation of the paper's self-image: exclusive, comprehensive, accurate, and impartial. It can be dismissed as mere rhetoric, as the hyperbolic claims of the businessman, but it also bears more careful consideration. Mist certainly printed news from all over Europe, and beyond into the Ottoman and Persian empires, across trading routes to British colonies in North America and the East Indies. Irish and Scottish

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[22] Raymond, Invention of the newspaper, p. 2. Mist's seditious practices and the relationship between newspapers and the state are discussed in chapter 7, below.

[23] Weekly Journal, 3 August 1717.

affairs were well covered, as was news from outside London and Westminster. As for accuracy, its achievement (or at least claims to that effect) continued to be a means for Mist to attack his whiggish rivals in both politics and business. For example, reports in other papers about Spanish intrigues at the court of the Ottoman Empire allowed Mist to scornfully dismiss his competitors for presenting 'such Trumpery for News, and such Forgeries for Intelligence'.[24] Impartiality was beyond it, however, as can be seen from a close reading of the contents of the foreign reporting.

Domestic intelligence – methods of reporting

Domestic reporting was then the mainstay of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers, and this, in turn, was predictably dominated by day-to-day events in the life of the capital. London was at the centre of the printing world. News had always been disseminated from St Paul's; the cathedral church's environs were home to sundry print shops, booksellers and hacks.[25] It is important to remember that the *Weekly Journal* was specifically a London newspaper in an age of provincial, not national, newspapers; it was effectively a local newspaper, albeit one with a wider readership. The streets of the contiguous cities of Westminster and London and, on the other side of the River Thames, the borough of Southwark were enough to supply Mist's newspapers with the bulk of their news. But how was this crop harvested?

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[24] Weekly Journal, 6 July 1719.

[25] J. Raven, 'St Paul's precinct and the book trade to *c.*1800', in D. Keene *et al* (eds), St Paul's: the cathedral church of London 604-2004 (London, 2004), pp. 430-8.

News, like advertisements and letters, could be delivered to the printing house by correspondents; it was also gathered in.

There are few descriptions of how exactly news writers conducted their affairs in the eighteenth century. While we are familiar with the figure of the eighteenth-century journalist – the hack writer of stock imagery – it is unclear who he or she was or what he or she actually did.[26] There are no standard descriptions of his working practices. The journalist would not have been a specific type of writer on Grub Street: 'journalism' as a term for a profession, or perhaps a genre of writing, itself dates from the nineteenth, not the eighteenth, century. We can, however, learn something of their methods. In 1729 a small spat between (anonymous) coffee shop owners and (equally anonymous) journalists appeared in print.[27] The 'coffee-men', who felt able to 'consider their Houses as the Staples of News', railed against 'the Impositions and Abuses put upon them and the whole Town by the present set of News-Writers; who might have maintain'd their Ground and Credit without Interruption, if they had not carried Matters too far'.[28] The trespasses of the writers had been many and the complaint is a lengthy one:

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[26] Histories of journalism, such as M. Conboy, Journalism: a critical history (London, 2004), tend to concentrate on the product rather than the practice. See also M. Harris, London newspapers pp. 99-113. Harris concentrates on political journalists and the financial status of such writers.

[27] 'A Coffee-Man', The case of the coffee-men of London and Westminster. Or, an account of the impositions and abuses put upon them and the whole town by the present set of news-writes with the scheme of the coffee-men for setting up news-papers of their own; and some account of their proceedings thereupon. (London, [1729]); Anonymous, The case between the proprietors of news-papers, and the coffee-men of London and Westminster, fairly stated (London, [1729?])

[28] 'Coffee-man', Case of the coffee-men, pp. 4-5.

> The Methods made use of by the present Set of News-Writers, to get Intelligence, and fill up their Papers, expose both them and their Productions to the utmost Contempt.
>
> *First*: Persons are employed (One or Two for each Paper) at so much a Week, to haunt Coffee-Houses, and thrust themselves into Companies where they are not known, to plant themselves at a convenient Distance, to overhear what is said, in order to pick up Matter for the Papers. By this Means Gentleman are often betrayed and embarrass'd in the Management of their private Interests and Concerns. And by this Means too, the greatest Falshoods and the idlest Fictions are often publish'd for Matters of Fact. For these Sons of *Mercury* are often distinguish'd by Persons of Discernment; and when they are so some rouzing Falshood is utter'd in their Hearing for a Truth; which the next Day comes out, upon the *Credible Information*, to the great Wonder and Edification of the whole Town.[29]

It was not only coffeehouses that suffered these irritating people loitering about, hoping for a line or two for the papers. They could be found outside the houses of the great and good, inveigling their way into the confidences of the domestic staff; they occupied spots outside the offices of government, getting news from junior clerks and doormen for the price of a drink; and while in the alehouse 'there from Carmen, Porters and Common Fellows, pick up Matter for the Publick Attention'.[30] Accusations of invention, fraud, plagiarism and ghoulishness (the writers are said to track undertakers for news of sicknesses and deaths) follow.[31] While this is certainly a jaundiced view of the news-writer's life, it does reveal a form of journalistic endeavour. Once again the role of the sociable public spaces such as the coffeeshops and taverns is stressed. It seems hard to exaggerate the importance of such places: but here, the usual relationship noted by

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[29] 'Coffee-man', Case of the coffee-men, pp. 5-6.
[30] 'Coffee-man', Case of the coffee-men, pp. 7-9.
[31] 'Coffee-man', Case of the coffee-men, pp. 9-13.

historians of the public sphere is reversed. Instead of the propagation of news, we have its invention.

Other forms of journalistic resources were more commonly employed, especially when it came to news from outside London. When, in 1722, Mist's associate Doctor Gaylard petitioned Viscount Townshend for release from the incarceration he suffered for his involvement in the production of the newspapers, he wished to emphasise his distance from the news reporting process and made some remarks on how the *Journal* corralled its news. 'The home News is generally taken from the Publick papers,' he pleaded, 'or sent in by Correspondents by the Penny Post'.[32] This reliance on plagiarism and the initiative of individuals meant that the reporting of home affairs was necessarily selective.

The geographic spread of the provenance of domestic reporting can help reveal to us the extent of the newspaper's circulation and the relative importance of certain types of domestic news (shipping, for example, or assizes). The regional networks of provincial newspapers have been fruitfully examined, particularly by C.Y. Ferdinand in her work on the *Salisbury Journal*.[33] G.A. Cranfield once plotted the 'sphere of influence' of the *Northampton Mercury* in 1759 by studying the geographic origins of its advertisements. On similar evidence alone, the sphere of influence that was

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[32] Petition of Doctor Gaylard, n.d., London, The National Archives (T.N.A.), State Papers, 35/34, f. 161; Harris, London newspapers, p. 158.
[33] C.Y. Ferdinand, 'Distribution networks for the local press in the mid-eighteenth century', in R. Myers & M. Harris (eds), Spreading the word: the distribution networks of print (Winchester, 1990), pp. 131-49; C.Y. Ferdinand, Benjamin Collins and the provincial newspaper trade in the eighteenth century (Oxford, 1997).

the *Weekly Journal*'s to command would barely reach outside the metropolitan area.[34] We know that readership of the newspaper was certainly wider than that, not least through Mr Mist's own boasts, although such a conclusion rests upon better evidence than boasting alone. The London newspapers could be and were distributed throughout the nation via the post office.[35] That the London press carried great weight outside the confines of the great conurbation on the Thames is also made apparent by the reception of a scandalous edition of the *London Journal* in Birmingham and the surrounding area in 1721:

> Yet we find that as many, or more of the Paper censur'd, sell than of the former, more Zeal being made use of in the dispersing of them than ordinary, by Hawkers who circulate some 30 or 40 Miles round us, with this Paper in particular, and wth wch they are furnish'd by one Pasham, a Bookseller in Northampton. Therefore (may it please your Lordship) I humbly offer this, that some Method may be taken, whereby the Country may be preserved agt the Poison that insinuating Libel begins to spread around us, not only here but in other great Towns since the Country is (wth submission) as susceptible of any Contagion as the City ... [L]ast Saturday's Paper is now become the General talk of not only this Place, but Coventry, Warwick, &c ... In this Case, not knowing whether the Gonvernmt was inform'd of the Footing this Paper has got in the Country, where it is equally capable of disturbing the Quiet of the People, for my Part I would leave no Stone unturn'd to suppress it, and its Abettors, the Publisher, Hawker, &c as well in the Country as London.[36]

Networks for London newspapers are harder to reconstitute, especially if – as is the case with Mist's newspapers – there are no lists of subscribers or regional agents. However, in the absence of any systematic evidence pointing

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[34] For a discussion of the advertisements in Mist's newspapers see chapter 1, above.

[35] The methods of national distribution are discussed in Harris, London newspapers, pp. 38-48.

[36] 'A.B.' to Carteret, 16 August 1721, T.N.A, SP 35/28, f. 47.

to the booksellers who acted as regional distributors of the *Weekly Journal*, the newspapers' use of provincial correspondents and news stories can be used not only to demonstrate where the news came from, but also to suggest where it went to.

Reporting the provinces

Between 1725 and 1728, the period the paper was entitled *Mist's Weekly Journal*, news was announced from 248 specifically named towns and vicinities across the British Isles. (This analysis restricts itself to locations within the two kingdoms of Britain and Ireland, but it is of no little interest that on occasion news from American imperial possessions, such as Boston and Jamaica, was treated as 'Home' news.) Some 126 of these towns were mentioned only the once, the subject of only the most fleeting metropolitan notice. A further 92 locales merited irregular observation, being the source of between 2 and 9 reports. Impinging more strongly on the consciousness of careful readers of the *Weekly Journal*, another 18 towns appeared in print between 10 and 30 times. The ten remaining towns and cities are the subject of Table 2, below.

At first sight, the table seems somewhat unsurprising. Dublin and Edinburgh were capital cities and the focus of their respective countries' printing trades.[37] Norwich, Bristol, Exeter, and York, were not only four of the

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[37] J.W. Phillips, Printing and bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800: a bibliographical enquiry (Dublin, 1998); R. Munter, The history of the Irish newspaper 1685-1760 (Cambridge, 1967); R.H. Carnie & R.P. Doig, 'Scottish printers and booksellers, 1668-1775', Studies in Bibliography 5:12 (1959), pp. 131-59; 5:14 (1961), pp. 81-96; 5:15 (1962), pp. 105-20.

largest urban centres in England after London, but were also vital regional hubs. The smallest town of the ten, Bath's reign as queen of the eighteenth-century spa towns was just beginning in the 1720s; its social and cultural importance is a historiographical industry in its own right.[38] Cambridge was home to an ancient university. However, one should also note some absences from the list whose greater prominence in the paper might otherwise have expected. Oxford, for instance. After all, it was the university town more closely linked with Jacobite activity. While it is the source of 28 stories (and as such only one place below Cambridge in this list), one might have expected more.

Table 2. Number of domestic news reports in *Mist's Weekly Journal*, 1725-28, by town

	1725	*1726*	*1727*	*1728*	*Total*
Edinburgh	34	51	42	31	158
Dublin	34	51	41	30	156
Norwich	22	29	13	9	73
Bristol	6	15	23	17	61
Bath	17	26	10	6	59
Gloucester	8	23	12	9	52
Exeter	3	9	22	14	48
Worcester	4	21	9	5	39
York	16	8	8	4	36
Cambridge	3	8	13	2	31

[38] See P. Borsay, The image of Georgian Bath, 1700-2000: town, heritage and history (Oxford, 2000), for a study of the history of 'Georgian Bath', its construction and afterlife.

The existence of provincial presses was also important, forming a wider network for the distribution of print and participation in the print culture of the day. Dublin, Edinburgh, York and Cambridge were all blessed with a history of printing long pre-dating the eighteenth century.[39] The number of printers in Dublin had grown in the 1720s, partly encouraged by the paper war surrounding 'Wood's halfpence', a controversy that fed much of *Mist's* interest in the city.[40] Norwich possessed two newspapers at this time, as did Bristol, Exeter, and York. The appetite for news could only support one provincial title apiece in Gloucester and Worcester. Of the towns on the list, only Bath and Cambridge could not support a title of their own during these years, although of course both came into the orbits of other regional newspapers.[41]

These outposts of print culture were all connected by Britain's improving internal communications. Indeed, it was the very normality of receiving newspapers from London through the post which, he claimed, had led Edward Farley, in 1728, to the mistake of reprinting the Persian Libel

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[39] While the Licensing Act had in general forbidden printing in England outside London, there were exceptions made for Cambridge (along with Oxford) as a university town and for York. D. McKitterick, A history of Cambridge University Press (2 vols, Cambridge, 1992-1998); W.K. Sessions & E.M. Sessions, Printing in York from the 1490s to the present day (York, 1976).

[40] Phillips, Printing and bookselling in Dublin, p. 40. For the controversy surrounding Wood's attempted coinage innovations, see P. McNally, 'Wood's halfpence, Carteret, and the government of Ireland, 1723-6', Irish Historical Studies 30 (1997), pp. 354-76.

[41] G.A. Cranfield, A handlist of English provincial newspapers and periodicals 1700-1760, (Cambridge Bibliographical Society Monographs, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1952); G.A. Cranfield, 'A handlist of English provincial newspapers and periodicals, 1700-1760. Additions and corrections', Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society 2 (1956), pp. 269-74.

without due consideration. He had received that particular copy of *Mist's* 'in the usual manner as it before had been constantly sent to him, and was not sought out by any evil contrivance and as soon as it came to his hands he inadvertently suffered the same to be reprinted in his news paper without reading or being acquainted with the contents thereof'.[42] This lack of proper diligence, bred of familiarity, resulted in a provincial echo of the clamour of the London prosecutions.[43]

The post office was an efficient arm of state.[44] Government frequently used it to distribute apologetics for the administration's policies free of charge.[45] Opposition newspapers were also distributed through the post, whether by printers or by individuals; this was, unsurprisingly, not gratis. (The mail was also placed under surveillance by the government, in order to gather information. Mist's name is included in a warrant of 1730 as one of several whose correspondence was to be monitored.[46]) The quality of British roads was also improving during this period. While the creation of new turnpike roads is mainly associated with the period from 1750 to 1770, this turnpike boom had been prefigured by a slow growth throughout the first half of the century; the middle years of the 1720s had seen a small peak in the number

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[42] Petition of Edward Farley, n.d, T.N.A., London, SP 36/16, f. 268.
[43] See chapter 7, below.
[44] K. Ellis, The post office in the eighteenth century: a study in administrative history (London, 1958). While it has nothing to say directly on the post office, J. Brewer, The sinews of power: war, money and the Englissh state, 1688-1783 (London, 1989) illustrates how high those eighteenth-century administrative standards were.
[45] L. Hanson, Government and the press, 1695-1763 (Oxford, 1936), p. 116.
[46] Miscellaneous warrants, 15 May 1730, T.N.A., SP 36/18 ff. 211-12; Ellis, The post office, pp. 60-77.

the manner in which the domestic reporting in the pages of the newspaper orientated itself westwards. While there are articles from a greater number of towns in the counties immediately surrounding London, the south-west of the country supplies by far the largest number of stories for the newspaper. While one cannot directly link these figures with a greater preponderance of readers, it is more than suggestive of *Mist's* wider influence outside of London. Furthermore, it categorically illustrates the newspaper's reliance on news from Dublin and Edinburgh for its coverage of Scottish and Irish affairs – five other towns (the largest of which are Glasgow and Cork) only supply between them an additional forty stories.

Table 3. No. of towns & stories reported in *Mist's Weekly Journal*, 1725-28, by region[i]

	Number of towns	*Number of stories*
South-west England	32	334
South-east England	34	239
Eastern England	13	154
Northern England	13	113
West Midlands	7	85
East Midlands	10	78
Wales	5	22
Scotland	4	187
Ireland	2	167

[i] Includes only towns featuring in more than one story

It is tempting to suggest that this lean towards the west was because of the improved roads that region of the country enjoyed, as discussed above. However, if that were the case, one would expect this bias to apply equally to Mist's competitors. To test this, Table 4, below, demonstrates some points of comparison with another leading metropolitan newspaper, the *London Journal*, over the same time period. The commercial rivalry between *Mist's* and this other newspaper had been during these years politically accentuated by the Walpole administration's buy-out of the previously oppositional *London Journal*, an attempt to counter opposition emanating from the periodical press.[50] The most notable difference between the domestic news coverage of the two papers is immediately apparent. The *London Journal* seems to have been so entitled with a nice precision: there were simply far fewer news articles with a provincial provenance from fewer towns (144 towns and localities were mentioned in all). Over the issues, 579 stories appeared in the *London Journal* from outside London, compared to 1,508 in *Mist's*. In this case at least, Nathaniel Mist was justified in his early boast that his *Journal* would, when it came to domestic news, 'be filled with a greater Variety every Day, than any other Paper can be'.[51]

The regional bias was also far less pronounced in Mist's competitor, or rather it had been reoriented towards the east. When one considers that the most reported urban area in the *London Journal* outside London was neither Edinburgh or Dublin, but Portsmouth; that Bristol also featured more prominently than the capital cities of Scotland and Ireland; and that the

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[50] Harris, London newspapers, p. 116.
[51] Weekly Journal, 3 August 1717.

Kentish port of Deal is one of the most common towns to be found in the news columns of the government paper; then one can imagine that the compilers of the *London Journal* found material from maritime areas close to London far easier to come by.[52] It also suggests that, for all the money supplied by the government, despite the free postage that the *London Journal* benefited from, its network of correspondents was far more limited.

Table 4. No. of towns and stories reported in the *London Journal*, 1725-28, by region[ii]

	Number of towns	*Number of stories*
South-east England	23	155
South-west England	14	120
Eastern England	6	40
Northern England	4	19
East Midlands	5	16
West Midlands	2	12
Wales	1	2
Scotland	3	58
Ireland	3	73

[ii]Includes only towns featuring in more than one story

[52] The ten most commonly reported urban areas in the *London Journal* were, in descending order, Portsmouth, Bristol, Edinburgh, Dublin, Deal, Canterbury, Gloucester, Norwich, Exeter, and Cambridge.

What can explain these differences? An obvious factor is the political geography of England during this period. The west of England and Wales would have been fertile ground for Mist's form of toryism. Studying the geographic distribution of parliamentary safe seats before the proscription of 1714, W.A. Speck concluded that 'Wales and the West [of England], the bastions of the royalist cause in the civil wars, were the bulwarks of Toryism in the early eighteenth century'. Linda Colley also notes the 'tenacity' of the tory vote in the Midlands.[53] It is not unlikely that such a political geography influenced editorial selection. After all, if the *Weekly Journal* could not meet with approval in such areas, where could it succeed?

The election of 1727 and the newspapers

Of course, there was much to report, politically at least, in 1727. George II's accession to the throne had had the constitutionally inevitable effect of triggering a general election, two years before the septennial act would have otherwise brought to a conclusion his late father's second parliament. It has become, in many ways, a forgotten election, obscured from view by discussions of the continuation of the Walpole administration, civil lists and coronations.[54] It is indeed easy to dismiss as unimportant. The election would prove fruitless for the opposition to Walpole's regime – after

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[53] W.A. Speck, Tory & whig: the struggle in the constituencies 1701-1715 (London, 1970), p. 67; L. Colley, In defiance of oligarchy: the tory party 1714-60 (Cambridge, 1982), p. 119. A case study of regional toryism can be found in P. Jenkins, 'Midland toryism in the eighteenth century: a new source', Journal of Regional and Local Studies 5 (1985), pp. 1-12.

[54] For example, see P. Langford, A polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 11-15. Threats to Walpole's pre-eminence are discussed solely in terms of high politics and manoeuvres at court.

an election where only 114 seats were contested 'the new House of Commons consisted of 415 ministerial supporters, 15 opposition Whigs, and 128 Tories, a government majority of 272, the largest since George I's accession'.[55] However, it serves well as a case study to illustrate Mist's style of reporting. Newspapers may have been stymied in their ability to report parliament, but they were perfectly free to report and comment on the scramble for seats.

It is quite clear that *Mist's* expected more than was actually to come from the reversionary interest, as can be seen from the very issue of the paper that reported the death of George I. A news item related the following 'accident': 'On Thursday last, as the Duke of Newcastle and Sir Robert Walpole were returning from the Royal Exchange, after proclaiming the King, at the End of Long-Acre, near Queen-Street, the Axletree of the Chariot broke, and they fell down'. Two paragraphs later the reader was informed of the appointment of a new Master of the Horse and assured that 'there will soon be other Alterations'.[56] Whether the report of the prime minister's accident is an accurate relation of real events or not, it serves to act as political information for the paper's readers through the clarity of its innuendo – the new King would not suffer his father's administration to continue. Despite initial, perhaps ironic, rumours of a patriot king – 'We hear from almost all Parts of a commendable Zeal, at work for returning to the ensuing Parliament, Representatives truly Lovers of their Country, such as his Majesty

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[55] R. Sedgwick (ed.), The history of Parliament: the House of Commons 1715-1754 (2 vols, London, 1970), I, p. 37.
[56] Mist's Weekly Journal, 17 June 1727.

has been graciously pleased to declare himself', the paper reported – *Mist's* coverage was to be dominated by stories of the venal and corrupt practices that marked whig electioneering.[57]

No doubt Mist's audience were well aware of the general conduct of elections and the newspaper's first comment on the matter seems almost weary as 'the boroughs hold up yet to an extravagant Price, in the Alley; the Country Corporations live freely upon the Occasion, which produce many and various Effects: In some Places they wallow amicably drunk in the Streets, and in others they go together by the Ears, dealing about broken Pates and bloody Noses in a plentiful Manner'.[58] However, the reports of electoral corruption soon changed in tone to a more outraged tenor. Corruption seemed to be endemic; to such an extent that the news columns ironically suggested that it was not news at all. Some stories were not even reported as they were 'no more than we knew before ... as it is carried on publickly, we see no Occasion for putting it into a Newspaper'.[59] Such reporting soon took on the air of bored disgust as the newspaper received 'Accounts of so many bare-faced and unprecedented Practices, relating to the Elections in divers Places, that, considering the Laws made in those Cases, 'tis a Shame to divulge them'.[60]

The *Weekly Journal* divulged in any case. One example of electoral malpractice was the creation of freemen in order to create or bolster whig majorities in corporations such as Stafford and Radnor. The use of such a

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[57] Mist's Weekly Journal, 15 July 1727.
[58] Mist's Weekly Journal, 22 July 1727.
[59] Mist's Weekly Journal, 26 August 1727.
[60] Mist's Weekly Journal, 23 September 1727.

procedure in Gloucester suggested that this was a tactic that supporters of the privileges of the Church of England would have had special reason to detest:

> That one of the contending Parties being resolved to have a fair Election for the Town, have made above one Hundred new Freemen, some of which are Presbyterian, some Independent, and some Anabaptist Preachers, with others of the same Stamp, equally entitled to the same Freedom; and that the other Side grumbling at the Proceedings, the Saints threaten them with a Legion of Dragoons.[61]

Here *Mist's* coupled the newspaper's usual sectarian animosity with a form of criticism that had become prevalent: the use of old whig arguments from previous reigns. The vision of a nation forcibly becalmed into political submission attended reports from Taunton – where 'it was found necessary to call in the Military Force there to appease [the discontented lower gentry], which was not effected without the breaking of Pikes and Bayonets' – and Hindon.[62] Such uses of whig argument by opposition newspapers have been discussed by Quentin Skinner, who argues that they served to lend legitimacy to their discontent with the government.[63] This is no doubt correct, but its early employment here in *Mist's Weekly Journal* illustrates that this usage was not solely the creation of Viscount Bolingbroke and the *Craftsman* for his 'party', as Skinner would have it.[64] Violence – though this time of the mob rather than of the military – accompanied the illegitimate use of

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[61] Mist's Weekly Journal, 12 August 1727.
[62] Mist's Weekly Journal, 12 August 1727; 20 January 1728.
[63] Q. Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition: the case of Bolingbroke vs. Walpole', in N. McKendrick (ed.), Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J.H. Plumb (London, 1974), pp. 93-128.
[64] Skinner consistently places Bolingbroke at the head of an organised opposition, often referring to the opposition as being 'his party'.

magistrates' authority in by far the longest and most detailed election report to appear in *Mist's*, as "A.B." regaled the newspaper's readers with events surrounding the poll for the county of Middlesex. The report received such prominence, the paper commented, so 'that the World may see what Sort of Spirit those Men are of, who, with Heat, Virulence and Rage, assert the Doctrine of Moderation, and, with Clubs and Stones in their Hands, declaim against Riots and Rebellions'.[65]

Not all of the election coverage in the newspaper was straightforward reportage. Situated between the regular news items and the advertisements throughout the campaign were a series of italicised articles – almost certainly paid for – alerting voters to candidates in various elections. The first to appear was for Percival Hart, standing as a tory candidate for the county of Kent alongside Sir Edward Dering, who *'having served in former Parliaments, with approved Integrity, for the said County, has been prevailed upon by his Friends, to offer himself as a Candidate for the ensuing Parliament'*.[66] Other tory parliamentary potentials were William Gore, who failed to be elected for Buckinghamshire; Sir William Keyt and William Bromley, elected unopposed at Warwick; James Bertie and Frances Child, returned after a fractious scrap for the county of Middlesex; Sir John Chester and Sir Humphrey Monoux, who were beaten in Bedfordshire; George Chassin and Edward Morton Pleydell in Dorset; Charles Caesar, who became knight of the shire for

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[65] Mist's Weekly Journal, 2 September 1727.
[66] Mist's Weekly Journal, 15 July 1727. Hart had been a knight of the shire for Kent in Queen Anne's last parliament and was incorrectly assumed to have retired from parliamentary politics in 1715, D.W. Hayton *et al* (eds), The history of Parliament: the House of Commons 1690-1715 (5 vols, Cambridge, 2002), IV, p. 289.

Hertfordshire; and John Walter who stood in Surrey, but gave up the poll 'on the understanding that [his running mate, the opposition whig, Thomas] Scawen should pay all the election expenses'.[67] The most prominent of these paragraphs, though, was the appeal of the four opposition candidates for the City of London – Humphry Parsons, Sir John Williams, Richard Lockwood and John Barnard – a slate that had '*agreed to promote each other's Election to the utmost of their Power*'.[68]

However, not all the candidates who canvassed for votes through *Mist's Weekly Journal* were tories. Whigs were also to be found petitioning readers of this notoriously Jacobite newspaper: Edward Finch, the King's minister to Poland, who would take the University of Cambridge for the whigs (although he did of course have tory connections through his father, the Earl of Nottingham); Sir Roland Alston and Pattee Byng, who were returned for Bedfordshire; Lord Paget and Henry Barker, losers at Surrey; and Sir Roger Meredith & Sir Robert Furness, victorious at Kent.[69] Intriguingly, there was one other (presumably) whig announcement – Henry Skylling and Thomas Bennett were to stand for Wiltshire, a safe tory shire that, according to the *History of Parliament*, went uncontested in 1727.[70] The difficulty of their task was apparent in a somewhat desperate sounding plea: '*as they are not IMPOSED on the Freeholders, they wholly rely on their Vote, Interest and*

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[67] Mist's Weekly Journal, 22 July 1727; 29 July 1727; 19 August 1727; 26 August 1727; Sedgwick, History of parliament, II, p. 517.
[68] Mist's Weekly Journal, 29 July 1727.
[69] Mist's Weekly Journal, 12 August 1727; 26 August 1727.
[70] Sedgwick, History of Parliament, I, p. 343.

Friendship'. [71] Such a whig presence in the newspaper, even in the form of paid-for inserts presents a problem for those who would draw too easy an identity between a newspaper's politics, its readership, and those readers' political beliefs and actions.

Attentive readers of these puffs would not, however, have been able to make distinct these part divisions from their wording alone. Explicit party appellations were dropped as the announcements appealed blandly to readers' values. Even the keenest political observer may have found the implicit divisions hard to separate. For instance, while the tories in Dorset sought support from '*all Gentlemen who wish well to their Church, King and Constitution*', the whigs in Kent assured readers they were '*Persons of known Affection to his Majesty, and our happy Establishment in Church and State*'.[72] Nor was it any different when the parties were struggling for the same seats. The freeholders of Bedfordshire were to choose between tories who professed '*their Affection for his Majesty's Person and Family,* [and] *their Zeal for the Constitution as now happily establish'd in Church and State*' and whigs who were '*well known for their Zeal and Affection to his Majesty and his Royal Family, and to our present happy Constitution*'.[73]

It is not at all clear that Nathaniel Mist himself approved of such mealy-mouthed equivocating. Ten years later, in exile in Boulogne, he wrote on electioneering to the Pretender and how 'it was a Custom with all Candidates whatever to put in to all their Bills and Advertisements, Well

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[71] Mist's Weekly Journal, 12 August 1727.
[72] Mist's Weekly Journal, 26 August 1727.
[73] Mist's Weekly Journal, 19 August 1727.

affected to his Majesty King George'. In this particular case, Mist had been unable to bear a Jacobite publishing such a trimming notice and 'disdaining such a Piece of Hypocrisy, [Mist] prevail'd upon the rest of his Friends to leave out all such Words, and leave it upon his Merit of being affected to the King only, the Advertisement was understood by all the World'.[74] Thus however ran the common print rhetoric of tory and whig in the general election of 1727, coverage of which ended in *Mist's* on a predictably sour note. In the 'notoriously venal borough' of Hindon in Wiltshire, the readers of the *Weekly Journal* learned that

> Parliamentary Affairs have created such ill Blood in that Borough, that they are every now and then alarm'd with Rumours of War, Fire, and the like. The Complaint is chiefly against the Bailiff, who, it seems, has not pleased them in making his Return: However, he has found Means to keep his Neighbours quiet, by bringing from Warminster a Detachment of Foot to quarter upon them. This shews the Use of a standing Army, and that Soldiers are the best Peace-Makers.[75]

An election that had initially been seen as an opportunity for the tory party and the wider opposition had become a confirmation of the whig party's enduring hold on power. It was an oligarchy that might well have been corrupt and hypocritical, but it had survived the change of monarch both at Court and in the Commons. A disheartening prospect then for Nathaniel Mist and his newspaper: perhaps one should not be surprised that it was in the aftermath of these events that its Jacobitism should reach its peak in the Persian Libel scandal and the crisis of the seditious libel case of 1728.

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[74] Mist to Edgar, 23 July, 1735, R.A., Stuart Papers, 181/69.
[75] Mist's Weekly Journal, 20 January 1728.

Foreign affairs: the exporting of domestic concerns

Foreign reporting was central to the appeal of the *Weekly Journal*, but the prominence awarded to news from abroad has caused a certain level of confusion. James Sutherland's puzzlement over what Mist's 'half-educated readers' could have possibly understood of 'the large and indigestible gobbets of foreign news that appeared, week after week, in their favourite journal' is the most obvious example of this bewilderment.[76] However, it would also be mistaken to take an entirely opposite stance to Sutherland, to declare that, however much he may have tried to appeal to lower class readers, Mist's paper was essentially a product for the middling sorts, and that the coverage of foreign news merely reflected the interests of a commercial readership.

It has been suggested that perhaps England was just too 'dull and uneventful' in the eighteenth century, and perhaps the newspaper reader really did enviously consider the strange and terrible excitement of the life of the Frenchman, the German, and the Russian.[77] The hunger for and expectation of news as entertainment was certainly strong, Mist's paper itself commenting at one stage that 'Our foreign News this Week is all taken up with Amusement and Expectation; scarce ever was a Time when such Affairs were upon the Wheel and so little known of them; some surprizing Event must come forth from them all in a few Days, and perhaps is already, and yet we

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[76] Sutherland, The restoration newspaper, p. 145. Sutherland does not address this issue himself.
[77] Cranfield, The development of the provincial newspaper 1700-1760, p. 67.

know nothing of it, and are in the utmost impatience with the Expectation'.[78] Certainly, one cannot ignore the appeal of simple curiosity, although few historians would today share Cranfield's view of a comparatively somnolent Britain, untouched by religious and political division. No one who has read the *Weekly Journal* would accept it.

Curiosity is rarely simple, though, more often driven by other, wider concerns; we must return to Michael Harris's 'dominant interests' of commerce and politics. The commercial concerns of the newspaper reader bled into finer points of policy. Jeremy Black's various works on coverage of foreign affairs by the British press concentrate on its reaction to, and effect upon, British government policy.[79] His discussion of the response of London newspapers to Russian affairs, for example, hinges upon the fears of a foreign policy suborning the self-perceived and self-defined national interests of Britain to the alien and incompatible interests of the Electorate of Hanover during the Great Northern War (1700-21).[80] *Mist's Weekly Journal* was not alone in seeing this influence on policy as a malign interference as opposition whigs shared similar concerns over foreign policy. A similar superficial unity of opposition to George I's government was promoted by British naval deployments in the Mediterranean in 1718, as 'it was argued that such a policy endangered British trade to both Spain and the Mediterranean, and

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[78] Weekly Journal, 17 August 1717.
[79] See especially J. Black, A system of ambition? British foreign policy 1660-1793 (2nd edn, Stroud, 2000), pp. 115-23.
[80] J. Black, 'Russia and the British press 1720-1740', British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 5:2 (1982), p. 87; J. Black, British foreign policy in the age of Walpole (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 27-48; J. Black, 'The tory view of eighteenth-century British foreign policy', Historical Journal 31 (1998), pp. 469-77.

that Britain should not intervene in a conflict that did not affect vital British interests'.[81]

Mist's foreign news coverage also served a wider purpose. At a time when any direct reporting or commentary on Westminster politics was hampered by jealously guarded parliamentary privileges, coverage of foreign affairs could mask dissent on domestic matters. Previous studies of the connection between foreign news reporting and British politics have stressed newspapers' endorsements and criticisms of government foreign policy in an attempt to influence that policy towards the commercial interests and religious prejudices of their middling sort customers. In his study of British foreign policy in the eighteenth century, Black considers the press's impact from the point of view of its impact on public opinion alone, and concludes that the question itself is a 'vexed one' and that one should not 'exaggerate the potency of print'.[82] In other discussions of foreign news, Black has continued to emphasise the 'public sphere' role of newspapers in this regard.

The relationship between reporting and public policy is no doubt an important one, but in Mist's papers the dominant tone is of criticism of the ministry's foreign policy: it neither wished for nor could realistically expect such influence.[83] Instead, the most striking aspect of Mist's foreign coverage is the way in which it works as a direct commentary on party politics in early

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[81] Black, 'The press, party and foreign policy', p. 29.
[82] Black, A system of ambition?, pp. 116, 118.
[83] One has to bear in mind, though, that Mist was also promoting a Jacobite view of European politics, and as such would write encouragingly of those powers the Stuarts were wooing. For the vicissitudes and failures of this policy see D. Szechi, The Jacobites: Britain and Europe 1688-1788 (Manchester, 1994), pp. 85-125; K.W. Schweizer & J. Black, 'Jacobitism and British foreign policy', The European Legacy 2:5 (1997), pp. 849-53.

Hanoverian Britain. The struggle between whig and tory, court and country, was, in his pages, Britain's greatest export to the European continent. The French possessed a whig party, for instance, first noticed when news received in the French mails of the siege of Melazzo suddenly shifted towards reporting the strength of the Austrians, falling into line with pro-ministerial newspapers such as the *Post-Boy*. These '*French whigs*' would lie just as much 'as their Brethren do in other Places'.[84] British tories were, in a similar manner, no longer a unique product of English political history, but a part of an international movement: in the French case, the tory party was the Gallicans, 'those who are for appealing to General Council' in the *Unigenitus* affair.[85] They 'encrease daily, and now the Women are come into their Measures; they meet and make Protestations against the Bull, rail at the Pope, and make the Devil to do'.[86] Tory complaints about the new whig regime found happy echoes further afield than France, though, as 'the Hungarians persist to be uneasy at their being so overburthen'd with Quarterings of Soldiers; a Complaint with which that is not the only State aggriev'd in Christendom!'[87] The reference to the standing army controversies in Britain is clear. It is, though, news from the Polish Diet that best illustrates this exportation of British political disputes:

> The Court Party ... flatter'd themselves they should be able to ruin the Crown General ... On the contrary, the Anti-Courtiers, who consist chiefly of the antient Nobility and Gentry, and whom we may call the Tories of that Kingdom, because they stand up in

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[84] Weekly Journal, 27 June 1719.
[85] C. Jones, The great nation: France from Louis XIV to Napoleon (London, 2002), p. 45.
[86] Weekly Journal, 11 May 1717.
[87] Weekly Journal, 5 January 1719.

> Defence of the Rights of the People, and oppose all Innovations which were not a Part of its antient Constitution; have justified this general, alledging that he has acted according to the Laws of Poland, and done nothing inconsistent with the Character of an honest Man.[88]

While it made nonsense of Mist's affectations of party impartiality, such reporting was the best way for him to get around the restrictions on reflecting on domestic matters. During these early years of the whig oligarchy, to attack the ministry was to assail the Crown that it defended. Foreign news reporting, then, also played a part in furthering an anti-Hanoverian and occasionally Jacobite agenda. Firstly, it was under this banner that Mist could present respectful news of that Goliath of European politics, James Edward Stuart, 'James VIII & III', the old Pretender (although Mist preferred to refer to him, dutifully, as the Chevalier de St George). Regular news of the Pretender's progress filtered through Mist's pages. On a visit to Rome, Jacobites in London would be heartened to hear, the Pretender was 'entertained there two entire Hours, after which he was re-conducted with the same Ceremonies and the same Treatment as was heretofore done to the Emperor Charles V'.[89] Mist even manages to refer to him as 'the King of England', though only by presenting the words as being taken verbatim from a letter written by the Princess Sobieski, who was speaking of her future husband by that title.[90]

As well as puffing the Pretender, Mist could also use his foreign news to launch criticisms of his Hanoverian kings. While fears of a British foreign policy run on behalf the interests of Hanover may have been a fear that tory

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[88] Weekly Journal, 5 December 1724.
[89] Weekly Journal, 15 June 1717.
[90] Weekly Journal, 30 May 1719.

and whig alike could share, it is doubtful that the following considerations upon the fate of the vacant Swedish throne could have been received with much consensus:

> [B]y the Proceedings of the Estates of Sweden, the Monarchy there is reduced to a new Form, viz. from an Hereditary to an Elective Crown, the Queen having relinquished voluntarily, as some say, but not so voluntarily as others say, her Claim of Blood, and taken that low Step of accepting the Crown as the Gift of the People ... In a Word, the Kingdom is declared Elective, and the Royal Power so limited that the Swedes seem effectually secured against any of the Excursions of their future Kings.[91]

Of course, none but the most radical of whigs would begin to argue that the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Act of Settlement, and the accession of George I in 1714 had turned the British crown into an elective monarchy in that manner, but here Mist was scratching at the unresolved tensions of the Revolution Settlement. The next month, a correspondent signing himself 'T.L.', commented that events such as those in Sweden could be seen as the Devil's work, 'setting aside the Succession of their Monarchs by the Right of Primogeniture, the Way that first took Place in the World in the filling up Thrones'. 'May we not reasonably think them as much under a Possession,' he continued, 'as some Creatures were who run headlong down a steep Place into Confusion'.[92]

It was another elective monarchy, that of the Poles, that provided the best material for Mist's anti-Hanoverian foreign reporting. An alien German prince ruled the Poles, in this case Augustus II, Elector of Saxony. In Poland too, was an exiled, nativist king, in the person of Stanislaus Leszczynski.

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[91] Weekly Journal, 4 April 1719.
[92] Weekly Journal, 2 May 1719.

These two roughly proximate similarities, ignoring any complications (such as Stanislaus having been placed on the throne with Swedish backing after the military defeat of Augustus), allowed Mist to exploit the discontent felt by the Poles under Saxon rule for British political purposes. One week before the day appointed in the Book of Common Prayer for the anniversary celebrations of the Stuart restoration, an anniversary the paper never failed to commemorate itself, Mist informed his readers of the following events:

> We are advised from Warsaw, in Poland, that the Feast of St. Stanislaus was celebrated there with more than usual Pomp, and that several of the Grandees gave sumptuous Entertainments upon that Day, and when they grew warm they drank several Healths, which were not understood by the Strangers who were present. Upon the whole it is observ'd that Stanislaus is a Name Poles seem very fond of, and it sounds much more sweetly in their Ears than that of Augustus.[93]

The Poles were unwilling to have Augustus's son, the Electoral Prince of Saxony, foisted upon them as his father's successor as 'it is a common saying amongst them, that they have had enough of the Family already'.[94] When the matter was put to the Polish Diet, the Electoral Prince was rejected by the virtuous – 'the Mercenaries in that Senate did not make the Majority' – although there were rumblings, Mist warned, of a confident court threatening to treat the partisans of Stanislaus 'in a very arbitrary Manner ... that is, to banish them, and confiscate their Estates'.[95] This arbitrary manner cannot have failed to remind the Jacobite reader of the treatment of Jacobite estates in Ireland after the Glorious Revolution and, more to the point, the forfeiture of estates following the failure of the 1715 Jacobite rebellion. The actions of the

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[93] Mist's Weekly Journal, 22 May 1725.
[94] Weekly Journal, 14 March 1723.
[95] Mist's Weekly Journal, 15 January 1726.

Diet in resisting the Court, to a reader of opposition views, were unlikely to be mirrored in a British Parliament corrupt, packed with places and pensions.

Mist's newspaper felt a sympathy for all other nations which could number their governments amongst their imports. A new Deputy-Governor of the Austrian Netherlands was warned that in order to win the esteem of the people, he would have to 'endeavour to reconcile them to a *German Government*, which hitherto they have shown no great Affection for'.[96] Following the death of Peter the Great in 1725, his wife, the Lithuanian-born Catherine I, nominally ruled Russia for two years. 'The Empress', reported the newspaper at the beginning of her reign, 'omits no occasion of ingratiating herself with the Soldiery, as thinking herself safe from the Attempts of those who may be discontented at *a Foreign Government*, while they (*the Soldiers*) continue her Friends'.[97]

It has been argued that representations of European politics in the British press were often warnings 'that Britain could readily follow the example of the Continent ... based on the assertion that the revolutionary settlement had failed to safeguard Britain against despotism, because no one event could preclude the evil consequences of bad ministers'.[98] This does not go far enough as an explanation for Mist's view of the world beyond the British Isles. The Revolution settlement itself was to blame for the evil consequences of Hanoverian rule. Whereas the loyal opposition viewed

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[96] Weekly Journal, 6 March 1725.
[97] Mist's Weekly Journal, 19 July 1725.
[98] J. Black & K. Schweizer, 'The British press and Europe in the 1730s', Journal of History and Politics 7 (1989), p. 42.

events in other countries – the dealings of their absolutist, corrupting governments – as visions of the future, Mist could only see reflections.

Conclusion

It seems obvious to say that a newspaper carries news. However, as Chapter 1 showed, news coverage did not in fact dominate the columns of the *Weekly Journal*. However, the news that was there was strongly marked by a highly engaged form of journalism. When discussing the political identity of a newspaper, historians have often concentrated on the essays and letters that were published, which more directly discussed matters of political principle. A close reading of the news pages of the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist reveals much: the choice of news, the manner in which events were reported, even the attacks on the accuracy of his rivals all go to further the political identity of the newspaper. Before this study goes on to outline that identity in detail, it will first consider the letters to Mr Mist with which the newspaper leavened the coverage of events.

Chapter 3

'To please and divert the whole Town': the forms and functions of letters in the *Weekly Journal*[1]

Introduction

One of the innovations of the weekly journal format was the combination of news reporting and the kind of editorial material – essays, letters, poetry, and other miscellany – more commonly associated with the type of essay sheet of which *The Spectator* was the exemplar. Either sent in by readers or written specifically for publication by regular contributors, these materials covered a variety of subjects and sought to entertain, inform, and instruct the reader. Their subject matter ranged from political commentary (in consideration of the laws of libel, these were often under the thinnest of figurative veils), history, religious belief, and the manners of the modern world. Initially in the form of letters addressed to Mr Mist, these letters eventually lost the paraphernalia of the letter form – the salutations to the recipient, the signature of the writer – to take on more recognisably the shape of an individual essay.

For many historians, these are the beginnings of the leading article, that curious summation and judgement of a newspaper as a corporate entity, their daily sermon to the readership. Leaving aside questions of teleology, this relationship is not entirely clear. While no doubt many readers would agree with the sentiments of the letters and essays, identify with them even,

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[1] Mist's Weekly Journal, 29 February 1724.

many would not, some writing in to disagree in public. Again, as with Mist's news coverage, one should not assume a unanimity of view between the various parties concerned, whether writer, printer, or reader.

This chapter aims to examine what role this editorial matter played within the context of the newspaper as a whole. It concentrates particularly on the correspondence the newspaper contained, and what that can tell us about the community of readership that bought, read, and interacted with the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist. It places newspaper correspondence in the wider context of letter writing in the early eighteenth century, seeing the published letters as a particular genre of the form. It examines the lines upon which such correspondence was conducted and also considers the republication of these entertainments in separate editions.

Letters in the eighteenth century

The eighteenth century was an epistolary age.[2] The primary means of personal communication, published collections of correspondence provided models for the literate classes – one troubling example, for both contemporaries and modern critics alike, being the Earl of Chesterfield's letters of advice and admonition to his natural son.[3] Literary criticism has often concentrated its concerns on the epistolary novels of, among others,

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[2] E.T. Bannet, Empire of letters: letter manuals and transatlantic correspondence 1680-1820 (Cambridge, 2006); C. Brant, Eighteenth-century letters and British culture (Basingstoke, 2006). Of course, that is not say other periods are not 'epistolary ages': see, for instance, G. Schneider, The culture of epistolarity: vernacular letters and letter writing in early modern England, 1500-1700 (Newark, 2005).

[3] A.C. Dean, 'Authorship, print and public in Chesterfield's *Letters to his son*', Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 45:3 (2005), pp. 691-706.

Samuel Richardson, Fanny Burney, and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos.[4] For historians, this culture of letter writing has always been an absolute boon, so much of the working practice of the discipline being taken up with the evaluation and utilisation of correspondence as evidence.[5] The present study is inevitably an instance of this – much of the research beyond the newspapers themselves being concerned with reading the correspondence of individuals such as Nathaniel Mist himself or the Duke of Wharton, as well as that correspondence generated by the various officials of state conducting the business of government through the letter.

While methodological approaches understanding and utilising the letter form much of the intellectual background of the historian, to the degree where it has become almost a simple reflex of the craft, historical studies of the letter as a form – its construction, context, and communication – are rather rare.[6] It is undeniably true that 'there has been little study of letters as a genre, compared, for example, with poetry or the novel, and there has been little attention paid to letters as objects, compared, for example, to the

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[4] The secondary material on this subject is exceedingly large: for a general survey see T.O. Beebee, Epistolary fiction in Europe, 1500-1850 (Cambridge, 1999).

[5] For some recent examples, see P. Maddern, 'A woman and her letters: the documentary world of Elizabeth Clere', in L. D'Arcens & R. Juanita Feros (eds), Maistresse of my wit: medieval women, modern scholars (Turnhouts, 2007), pp. 29-46; S. Newman, 'The archival traces of desire: Vernon Lee's failed sexuality and the interpretation of letters in lesbian history', Journal of the History of Sexuality 14 (2005), pp. 51-75.

[6] It is possible that this is because of the daunting nature of the task. Gary Schneider's very first words on the subject suggest that 'early modern letters written in English have not been extensively studied largely because early modern correspondence in English comprises a staggering number of texts possessing numerous meanings and serving a variety of functions', Schneider, The culture of epistolarity, p. 13.

contemporary interest in the book as an object'.[7] Furthermore, what work has been done is most often the product of literary critics rather than historians – and while the literary critic and the historian may share a common subject in the culture of the eighteenth century, the questions asked and the methods of answering employed are not always sympathetic.

By far the most common subject for the literary critic is the possibilities of the letter as a medium for fiction.[8] Such discussions tend to particularly emphasise romantic fiction as in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, although some critics remember that the epistolary form did have other uses that 'have either been ignored by the canon or placed outside the epistolary tradition'.[9] The ubiquity of the epistolary form in eighteenth-century literature is readily apparent, and some historical context is supplied in attempts to explain why this was so. For obvious reasons, in this reading the spread of literacy is heavily implicated, as is the development of the Post Office.[10] The Post Office itself can be understood as a new medium, or as the necessary factor in the emergence of a new 'epistolary space'.[11] Furthermore, the epistolary form has been seen as representative of a private, feminine voice, as opposed to the apparently masculine values of the public sphere.[12]

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[7] D. Barton & N. Hall, 'Introduction', in D. Barton & N. Hall (eds), Letter writing as a social practice (Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 1999), p. 2.
[8] J.G. Altman, Epistolarity: approaches to a form (Columbus, Ohio, 1982).
[9] M.A. Favret, Romantic correspondence: women, politics and the fiction of letters (Cambridge, 2003), p. 35.
[10] S.E. Whyman, Sociability and power in late-Stuart England: the cultural worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720 (Oxford, 1999), p. 10.
[11] Favret, Romantic correspondence, pp. 22-3; J. How, Epistolary spaces: English letter writing from the foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's *Clarissa* (Aldershot, 2003).
[12] R. Perry, Women, letters, and the novel (New York, 1980), pp. 68-71.

Epistolary structures

In their survey of letter writing as a social practice, Barton and Hall have usefully identified four different elements of epistolarity: text, participants, activities, and artefacts.[13] It is the former two that concern us here, as there is little evidence for the historian to comment accurately on the process of composition or the tools used. In the current context, we have the texts of the letters, though mostly as reproductions – printed, edited, mediated – in the newspapers themselves. (A small number of manuscript letters submitted for publication have been preserved with other papers as a result of the state monitoring of Mist's activities.[14]) Our knowledge of the participants in this correspondence is slightly clouded: correspondents are identified commonly under pseudonyms or are left anonymous; the letters themselves are addressed to 'Mr Mist' or 'Mr Fog', though this is hardly an uncomplicated designation of a real, existing individual any more than 'Mr Spectator' had been.

Barton and Hall also make clear the wide variety of circumstances under which epistolary correspondence can take place and the peculiarities that these different contexts mean for the particular form that the correspondence takes. An obvious example would be the difference between the familial and the business letter.[15] This question of sub-genre is an important one, for the letter to the newspaper is surely one of these distinct types, with its attendant idiosyncrasies.

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[13] Barton & Hall, Letter writing, p. 6.
[14] London, The National Archives (T.N.A.), SP 35/14, ff. 169-70; SP 35/66, ff. 115-16; SP 36/19, f. 237. These are reproduced on pp. 122-8, below.
[15] Barton & Hall, Letter writing, pp. 2-5.

It has been asserted that 'secrecy, whether betrayed or closely guarded, was automatically assumed to be the letter's main attribute'.[16] In slightly more fanciful terms, though terms in sympathy with the sentimentality of some eighteenth-century prose, 'the long eighteenth century ... elaborated a concept of the letter as a private, sometimes feminine site where the inner-life achieves self-expression in the search for truth'.[17] However secrecy was hardly an issue for the newspaper correspondent; it was in fact the reverse of his or her intention. If most studies of letter writing in the eighteenth century concentrate on the personal and private communication of at most a small circle of associates, what can be said for a correspondence that was intended for immediate publication, for consumption by a far wider audience, unknown to the immediate participants? (Newspaper letters are not though entirely unique in this case. Similarities can be discerned with the published correspondence in the journals of the Republic of Letters.[18]) It is this public nature that has been least noted in the secondary literature, and complicates many of the generalisations that are made about letter writing in the eighteenth century.[19]

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[16] R. Chartier, 'Introduction: an ordinary kind of writing. Model letters and letter-writing in ancien régime France', in R. Chartier, A. Boureau & C. Dauphin (eds), Correspondence: models of letter-writing from the middle ages to the nineteenth century, trans. C. Woodall (Cambridge, 1997), p. 15.
[17] G. MacLean, 'Re-siting the subject', in A. Gilroy & W.M. Verhoeven (eds), Epistolary histories: letters, fiction, culture (London, 2000), p. 176.
[18] A. Goldgar, Impolite learning: conduct and community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750 (New Haven & London, 1995), pp. 54-114.
[19] Bannet, Empire of letters, pp. 287-302 points out that many 'essays' published in the Spectator were presented as letters, although her emphasis is on how such published letters were didactic tools, teaching readers about the correct form of correspondence.

Anonymity, pseudonymity, and identity

Besides some notorious cases – such as Defoe's 'Sir Andrew Politick' letters or Wharton's Persian letter – it is impossible to identify accurately the individuals who wrote into the papers in the hope of publication under an assumed name.[20] The problems faced by the historian have been well identified by Pierrette Lebrun-Pezerat, with reference to his work on letters published in the French *Journal des Postes* between 1865 and 1914, but with far wider relevance:

> Les lettres publiées émanent de personnes privées, connues ou non, de groupes plus ou moins organisés ou dissimulent leur auteur par l'utilisation de pseudonymes ou par l'anonymat; leur authenticité n'est donc pas aisée à établir. Seule l'existence d'archives manuscrites pourrait permettre de trancher en toute certitude, mais celles des journaux disparus depuis longtemps n'existent pas. Il faut donc mettre en œuvre d'autres critères qui doivent plus à l'intuition qu'à la preuve absolue.[21]

Chasing after anonymous contributors, perhaps through textual analysis of the sort used by some literary critics to ascribe authorship, is beyond the scope of this study. (Not least because such an approach is often far from convincing: one scholar has assumed that, during the period he was working on Mist's newspapers, Defoe's hand was behind most of the published letters, an assumption that can be based on little more than the

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[20] For Defoe, see P.N. Furbank & W.R. Owen, 'Defoe and "Sir Andrew Politick", British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 17 (1994), pp. 27-39; the original letters can be found in Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, 1 February 1718, 15 February 1718. (An earlier letter, on the treatment of poor debtors, is signed "D.D.F.", 28 December 1717.) For Wharton, see Chapter 7, below.

[21] P. Lebrun-Pezerat, 'La lettre au journal: les employées des Postes comme épistoliers', in R. Chartier (ed.), La correspondance: les usages de la lettre au XIX^{e} siècle (Paris, 1991), p. 427.

critic's understanding of Defoe's 'style'.[22]) However, one could compute from the sample rough proportions of how many letters were left anonymous, or with a carefully chosen pseudonym, or a true mark of identity. Table 5, below, illustrates the choice of designation, a choice that could be made either by the writer or by the printer.

Table 5. Subscriptions to letters in the 1720s[i]

	1720	*1721*	*1722*	*1723*	*1724*	*1725*	*1726*	*1727*	*1728*	*1729*
Anon.	6	4	5	9	5	2	9	6	8	9
Pseud.	26	27	11	7	7	7	13	12	8	9
Initials	10	5	6	3	6	3	4	3	1	1
Signed	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total	42	37	22	20	18	12	26	21	20	19

[i] Taken from letters published in sample of every third issue.

The public sphere was somewhat publicity-shy. The figures for anonymous or pseudonymous contributions to the *Weekly Journal* bear comparison to other publication trends. In an analysis of the catalogue to

[22] M.E. Novak, Daniel Defoe, master of fictions: his life and ideas (Oxford, 2001), p. 509. On attributions of anonymous works to Defoe, see J.R. Moore, A checklist of the writings of Daniel Defoe (Bloomington, Indiana, 1960); P.N. Furbank & W.R. Owens, Defoe de-attributions: a critique of J.R. Moore's checklist (London, 1994); P.N. Furbanks & W.R. Owens, 'On the attribution of periodicals and newspapers to Daniel Defoe', Publishing History 40 (1996), pp. 83-98; M.E. Novak, 'The Defoe canon: attribution and de-attribution', Huntington Library Quarterly 59 (1997), pp. 83-104; P.N. Furbank & W.R. Owens, Critical bibliography of Daniel Defoe (London, 1998).

Joseph Massie's library, Julian Hoppit has demonstrated that the proportion of anonymous works contained within it rose dramatically in the decades between the Restoration and the middle of the eighteenth century.[23] Whatever the degree, Mist's readers were well aware of the conventions surrounding the use of pseduonymity and anonymity and the complications that could arise there from.[24] Such matters were discussed when one correspondent wrote to Mist in praise of 'the Ingenuity of your Correspondents in inventing for them selves fictitious Names'. This correspondent, who actually signs himself 'Anonymous' (he also writes from '*Terra Incognita*'), divides Mist's pseudonymous correspondents into two ranks. First are those who are 'Men of Wit and Design in their Denominations, who resolving to steal from no Man, coin Names for themselves, and appropriate them to their own Use, by making them such as can be of Service to no ones Purpose but their own'. Less favoured were the prosaic, those who take names 'by which they mean nothing more than to conceal their real ones'.[25]

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[23] J. Hoppit, 'The contexts and contours of British economic literature, 1660-1760', Historical Journal 49 (2006), pp. 89-91.

[24] The histories of anonymity and pseudonymity are still, at the time of writing, to be fully realised. The relationship between anonymous letters and criminality and protest is explored in E.P. Thompson, 'The crime of anonymity', in D. Hay *et al*, Albion's fatal tree: crime and society in eighteenth-century England (London, 1975), pp. 255-336. Anonymity as a literary concept is explored in R.J. Griffin, 'Anonymity and authorship', New Literary History 30 (1999), pp. 877-95. R.J. Griffin (ed.), The faces of anonymity: anonymous and pseudonymous publication from the sixteenth to the twentieth century (Basingstoke, 2003) is a stimulating collection of beginnings: an especially helpful contribution in its provision of a statistical analysis is J. Raven, 'The anonymous novel in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1830', pp. 141-66.

[25] Mist's Weekly Journal, 23 April 1726.

After indulging in such pleasantries as wondering whether Mist's beguilingly named female correspondents were actually crotchety old Justices of the Peace, 'Anonymous' goes on to make what appears to have been his actual point, concerning the nature of using such identities in a newspaper not known for its political quiescence:

> But should your Papers hereafter fall into the Hands of a Person who is ignorant of your Character, he would be puzzled to think what a People you had convers'd with, and believe it to have been the Custom of your Time for a Man to have as many Names, as there were Subjects on which he wrote; or should any Man but yourself be found to have such a Collection of Letters by him, a good Decypherer, in the modern Way, would easily extract from them full Evidence to prove, that you were deeply engaged in a damnable Plot against the Government: He would raise an Army of *T*'s and *B*'s; he would demonstrate *Orthodox* to be a disaffected Person, *Philalethes* a large Fleet, and *Parthenissa* the Mother Church, *Non Eugenio* would be a certain General, and *Pick-ax* an undermining Statesman.[26]

The use of pseudonyms may have been a precaution, but it was not perfect: they concealed identities, but could also insinuate conspiracy. As Hoppit comments in regard to the Massie catalogue, 'a peak in the rate of anonymity was reached in the 1730s when Sir Robert Walpole often oppressed the press, though if anonymity was tied to oppositional politics it arguably heightened the risks of being tarred with the brush of sedition'.[27] Significantly, when compared to a bibliography of literature pertaining to the South Sea Bubble of 1720, one can see that while 'in Massie's collection only 31 per cent of works from 1660 to 1759 were published under an author's name ... in the literature of the South Sea Bubble it was just 23 per cent'.[28]

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[26] Mist's Weekly Journal, 23 April 1726.
[27] Hoppit, 'British economic literature', p. 88.
[28] Hoppit, 'British economic literature', p. 95.

Political sensitivities had a clear effect on the propensity to put one's name to one's work. The immediate political context for Anonymous's letter was provided by the relatively recent discovery of the Atterbury Plot, as well as other Jacobite conspiracies, where the government had seized letters written in cipher.[29] The threat of government monitoring of the miscellany appearing in the columns of the newspaper trade for sedition was a real one. A biographical discussion of the first Duke of Marlborough that was intended for serial publication was broken off after the first instalment as 'certain Gentlemen, with GREYHOUNDS at their Breasts [i.e. messengers of the secretary of state], having seiz'd our Materials, desiring, as 'tis supposed, to have the first reading of our Memoirs'.[30] Private letters now to be found preserved in the State Papers often reveal their interception, marked as such by the messengers who relieved their original possessors of them.[31] The possibility of such violent suppression of newspaper correspondence was an external brake on what correspondents wrote about to Mr Mist and how they wrote it.

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[29] G.V. Bennett, The tory crisis in church and state 1688-1730 (Oxford, 1975), pp. 243-51; E. Cruickshanks & H. Erskine-Hill, The Atterbury plot (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 164-5, 259-62; P.K. Monod, Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 95-125.

[30] Weekly Journal, 11 August 1722. For another example of how letters published in newspapers were monitored by the government see Chapter 7, below.

[31] For instance, the letter reproduced below as Figure 3 is marked 'Took out of the Pocket of Mr John Carter by me Geo Wiggs 28 Augt 1730', 'R.L.' to Mr Fog, 30 July 1730, T.N.A., SP 36/19, f. 237. Similarly, a letter bearing news of the arrest of the Duke de Riperda, at the time in the house of and under the protection of the British minister at Madrid, Colonel Stanhope, is marked with its provenance 'This Letter was taken out of Mr Perry's Pocket by Mr Daniel Chandler John Turner', 29 May 1726, T.N.A., SP 35/62, f. 75.

Letters from the publick

There were other forces also shaping the letter to the newspaper. By publishing letters from correspondents, the newspapers' readership became visible: they made themselves an integral part of the paper. Of course for this purpose the letters did not have to really originate from an unknown individual in, say, Westmoreland. A 'letter' cooked up in a garret handy for Carter Lane by a Grub Street hack served just the same purpose. It gave the impression to readers that they were part of a wider community of readership, one that they could take part in should they so wish.[32] This was, in some ways, a simulacrum of the model provided by the Republic of Letters, where 'for both journalists and readers, journals were a community effort, an institution fashioned by those it was meant to serve'.[33] It also points to one way in which the public sphere, as represented in the medium of print, could be less than transparent.

It is perhaps natural to make the assumption that the vast majority of letters to be found in the periodicals of the eighteenth-century were literary inventions of professional writers. However, it is important to realise that real correspondence was carried on, originating from outside Grub Street. Figures 5-7, below, illustrate this.[34] Figure 5 is a letter from the clearly pseudonymous 'Paul Fogg', sent to Mr Mist in 1718 with an essay for publication. The cramped hand and errors of grammar and spelling suggest a non-professional author. The plea for publication also suggests it was not

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[32] J.P. Klancher, The making of English reading audiences, 1790-1832 (Madison, Wisconsin, & London, 1987), pp. 18-22.
[33] Goldgar, Impolite learning, p. 90.
[34] T.N.A., SP 35/14, ff. 169-70; SP 35/66, ff. 115-16; SP 36/19, f. 237.

solicited by the paper. No room was found in the paper for its publication – considering its subject was to debate whether or not King George was a tyrant, a question it answered in the affirmative within the first three sentences, this should come as no surprise.

Figure 6 is another example of 'reader-generated content', describing an assault by dissenters on the sacred memory of Charles I. An annotation in the lefthand margin, 'E:C:', identifies Edmund Curll as one object of Mist's correspondent's ire. The handwriting is clearer, although again this is clearly a letter submitted for publication by a non-professional writer, 'If this may find a place in yr Journal,' writes Mist's correspondent, 'it will very much oblige many of yr Readers, if yr Author alters the Stile or Corrects the Errors of the pen it wil not be resented'.

Figure 7 shows a letter where the provenance is slightly more ambiguous. The clarity of writing in particular suggests that this letter, bearing news of a corrupt coroner's inquest, could indeed have been sent by a more accomplished, if not necessarily 'professional' writer. Real letters, sent by readers of varying degrees of familiarity with formal writing, were indeed sent to the newspapers in the hope of inclusion. Historians should not make the automatic assumption that letters and other miscellania in early eighteenth-century periodicals were always the product of fictional correspondences: readers did feel that they were part of a community of public correspondents and able to make contributions of their own.

An early example of the way the *Weekly Journal* played upon this communal aspect of the newspaper was the 'Miranda Meanwell' correspondence of 1719. Miranda's letter was, she wrote, a 'Publick Advertisement', an aid in her search for a suitable helpmeet:

> I have fifteen hundred Pounds to my Fortune, which is at my own Disposal; and as to my Person I hope not disagreeable ... Therefore I give fair Warning to all Batchelors (for a Widower I have no Notion of) that if I could meet with a young Man, about twenty four, of an Orthodox Principle, that has a fair reputable Character, well educated and can give undeniable Proofs of his unsully'd Virtue and Sobriety, one that is industrious, Debonair, good humour'd, facetious, and agreeable; with a Man that is bless'd with these excellent Endowments, I should think my self and my Fortune happily bestowed.[35]

It is worth noting that Mist's correspondent was in search of a young man who represented an ideal which could presumably be found somewhere among his readership, not only flatteringly endowed with all fair gifts of nature and cultivation, but also primarily of 'Orthodox Principle': like other advertisers, she had at least done some market research. It is unknown how many prospective grooms sent their bona fides to Mist's print shop, although Mist was pleased to boast of their number, in the next issue printing some examples from 'Frank Faithfull', 'Theophilus Lovewit' and 'Christopher Careful'.[36]

The correspondence continued for another three weeks, as Miranda answered her various suitors in the negative, and then the matter was dropped. However, in a sign that such exchanges were not carried on solely by a hidden coterie of writers but were also entered into by unconnected

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[35] Weekly Journal, 21 February 1719.
[36] Weekly Journal, 28 February 1719.

readers, Mist had to announce that the subject was closed, for 'we are obliged to publish that, whether the Lady and her old Lover are chopt in again, or what else may be the Matter, Mr. Mist knows not; but he has received express Commands from Madam, under her own Hand, not to publish any thing more upon that Subject till further Orders'.[37] If the Meanwell correspondence had been an entirely contrived affair, there should have been no need for such a public appeal; its necessity points to the way Mist's readers engaged with what they read in their newspaper. These sort of entertainments were an essential part of the paper, an integral part of their appeal, not only because the reader found them amusing or diverting, but because they offered the opportunity to become involved.

Nor are these letters merely a charming illustration of the whimsical appeal of the early newspaper. While one cannot talk with certainty about the motivation behind the insertion of the original letter from Miranda, one should not assume that it was cooked up solely to fill otherwise empty news columns, although this has been seen as the driving consideration for the inclusion of such materials.[38] Mist had to apologise to other correspondents whose missives were denied space; he also claimed that news of Miranda Meanwell's quest for love was more popular, and thus more important, than news of the war on the European mainland. However, the balance between news and entertainment was clearly one that had to be policed by Mist who 'cannot so crowd our Journal with Letters as to straiten our News, which is

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[37] Weekly Journal, 18 April 1719.
[38] M. Harris, London newspapers in the age of Walpole: a study of the origins of the modern press (London, 1987), p. 179.

the main Design of the Paper, and that which renders it most useful and profitable to our Readers'.[39]

Rules of engagement

To become involved, to have one's letter published, the correspondent had to abide by a certain mode of conduct. There were guides to letter writing on the market, but writing to a newspaper rather than, say, one's family or friends, entailed further requirements of good practice.[40] Of course, it had to be appealing to one's fellow readers and not 'too trifling, too tedious or too bold for us to meddle with; we hope the Gentlemen will not take it ill if all those are thought good Reasons for omitting them; we are willing to oblige every Body, but the main End of our Paper being Information and Diversion, we would keep as near the Text as we can'.[41] But once the theme was fixed, the letter written, and then conveyed to Carter Lane, there were other

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[39] Weekly Journal, 12 April 1718.

[40] For letter writing as a discipline that had to be learned, often from manuals, see E.T. Bannet, 'Empire and occasional conformity: David Fordyce's *Complete British Letter Writer*', Huntington Library Quarterly 66 (2003), pp. 55-79; Bannet, Empire of letters; Brant, Eighteenth-century letters, pp. 33-47; K. Dierks, 'Letter manuals, literary innovation, and the problem of defining genre in Anglo-American epistolary instruction, 1568-1800', Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 94 (2000), pp. 541-50; K.G. Hornbeak, 'The Complete Letter Writer in English, 1568-1800', Smith College Studies in Modern Languages 15 (1934), pp. vii-xii, 1-150; V. Myers, 'Model letters, moral living: letter-writing manuals by Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson, Huntington Library Quarterly 66 (2003), pp. 373-92; J. Robertson, The art of letter writing: an essay on the handbooks published in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (London, 1942); S. Walker, 'The manners of the page: prescription and practice in the visual organization of correspondence', Huntington Library Quarterly 66 (2003), pp. 307-29; S. Whyman, 'Advice to letter-writers: evidence from four generations of Evelyns', in F. Harris & M.C.W. Hunter (eds), John Evelyn and his milieu: essays (London, 2003), pp. 255-66.

[41] Weekly Journal, 24 May 1718

judgements to be made. Firstly, there were some technical considerations, such as minimum standards of legibility. Difficulties with the pen could hinder the publication of correspondents' offerings, as one 'H. Atkinson' was to find when he wrote to Mr Fog in 1735:

> *The Letter ... shall shortly have a Place: But if the Author could furnish us with a fairer Copy, we should be obliged to him, as it would prevent Mistakes, this being a little defaced in some Places; however, if we do not hear from him shortly, we shall give it to the Publick from the present Copy as well we can.*[42]

Once these more practical obstacles were overcome, contributions were judged as to their suitability by other criteria, of varying degrees of subjectivity. The constraints placed upon the would-be contributor were not just the arbitrary judgements of the publishers of the newspapers. The rules of this game were also fashioned by what was considered acceptable to the law and to the morality and mores of the audience. However, letters were not necessarily excluded if they ran against the general political tenor of the newspaper. Indeed, the inclusion of such contrary views often served to highlight the *Weekly Journal*'s newspaper virtues of honesty and reasonableness.

It had been a promise of the newspaper, out of a consideration to not 'put any Slight upon our Friends and Correspondents, who do us the Favour to write to us', that 'when we omit their Letters we are willing to take as much Notice of them as we can, and give them some of the Reasons why we do not take any more'.[43] As a result, it was common for the reader to be presented with brief private messages from Mr Mist to those he regrettably

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[42] Fog's Weekly Journal, 19 April, 1735.
[43] Weekly Journal, 12 April 1718.

had to bar from his columns. This also strengthened the effect of readership as community, the reader made aware not only of the elect whose letters were published, but also those who were not. The impression was thus given that this was a real correspondence that was being entered into, with acknowledgement from the receiver of the letter. They could also, if detailed enough in their critique of the volunteered offerings, be taken as constructive advice, guidelines to the paper's house style.

Obviously, the contributor would have to expect that there would often be a superfluity of material and not all could be published as, after all, 'it is to be considered at the same Time, that as the Paper will not contain the twentieth Part of what we receive, so consequently nineteen Parts in twenty must be left out'.[44] Such a statement was hardly untouched by hyperbole, another puffing of the *Weekly Journal*'s purported common currency, but other refusals were more concrete. One correspondent, identified only as 'W.G.', was not granted room for his letter as '*for some Reasons of State,* [the letter] *cannot be inserted*'.[45] Legal considerations were clearly a primary consideration when judging a letter's suitability for publication. This was especially so in times of political febrility, when self-censorship became a prudent measure, as when Mist had to excise 'one Paragraph concerning the *Habeas Corpus*, and some other Things, which we hope our Correspondent will excuse, since the Suspension of that Act makes it prudent to avoid certain Things, though good in themselves'.[46] Most obviously, the ability of

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[44] Weekly Journal, 12 March 1720.
[45] Weekly Journal, 1 March 1718.
[46] Weekly Journal, 8 June 1723.

Mist's correspondents to express any Jacobite fellow feeling in print was severely circumscribed. It was a criminal offence to suggest in print that the Pretender had any right to the throne, but even if one were not so bold as to suggest that, there were other limits as to how far one could go in expressing any loyalty to a wider 'movement', as one correspondent was informed:

> A Gentleman from Grays-Inn tells us in a Letter, that the unfortunate Gentlemen concerned in the late [Jacobite] Rebellion [of 1715], and that were in the several Prisons of this City, had a great many good People who had a tender Regard for their unhappy Circumstances, tho' no Friends to their Cause; but that the Case was now alter'd, and he was credibly informed that Major M— was in a Manner starving in Newgate, having never any body to come and see him, and yet at the same Time is so much of a Gentleman, even in those dismal Circumstances, as not to let any know them ——— We answer the Gentlemen, that we can only shake our Head and pity him if it be so; but we have some political Reasons why we don't care to publish his Letter.[47]

Of course, while Mist may not have cared to publish the letter verbatim, its contents were still publicised: one could negotiate the more ambiguous boundaries of the acceptability of Jacobitism. Sympathy for an individual Jacobite was possible, if not for the Jacobites in general, and thus implicit support of a wider Jacobitism could be hinted at.[48]

If Mist could not carry explicitly pro-Jacobite letters, and had to be careful with those where the attachment to the Stuart cause was merely implicit, there were no restrictions on publishing letters from those who would consider themselves his antagonists. Proponents of whiggery were often to be found amongst Mist's pages. The newspaper, like its rivals, made great play of its impartiality, its disinterestedness, and hence its credibility.

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[47] Weekly Journal, 19 March 1720.
[48] Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, p. 101.

Publishing whig letters, such as one from the anti-Jacobite 'Conscientia' attacking Mist's support for the printer of *Vox populi, vox dei*, a man hanged for his treasonable publication, furthered this self-image. 'They say you are impartial in all you write,' wrote Conscientia, 'pray let us see whether you are or no, and whether you dare be so honest to publish what you will find is neither in Favour of your self or your Party'. The reply continued on this question of impartiality, stating that by publishing the letter the correspondent can 'see that *Mr Mist* is the impartial Person he pretends to be'.[49]

However, the whigs had to maintain a certain sense of decorum, as indeed did all Mist's correspondents. Conduct was as important as conviction. This seemliness ruled out the publication of some letters by reason of their subject matter:

> *The Gentlemen who sent us a certain Query, are to understand, that we think it drawn up with a great deal of Humour, but we are sorry it is too free for this Paper, for we have made it a Rule, not to insert any thing but what may be read to an Assembly of Ladies without putting any to the Blush.*[50]

This propriety of Mr Mist emphasised the public nature of newspaper correspondence: the letters may take the appearance of private conversations between Mist and his readers, but their public nature requires a standard of conduct that recognises the existence of a wider audience.[51] This policing of the correspondence could also serve a political purpose:

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[49] Weekly Journal, 26 September 1719.
[50] Mist's Weekly Journal, 23 July 1726. Italics as in original.
[51] The assumption that newspapers would be read in mixed company is pertinent, given the role of gendered readings of the public sphere, see B.W. Cowan, 'What was masculine about the public sphere? Gender and the coffeehouse milieu in post-Restoration England', History Workshop Journal 51 (2001), pp. 127-57.

witness the differing reception afforded to two controversialists. The first, criticising the actions of the King of Spain, was received by Mist quite warmly because even 'if he be an Adversary, [he] writes in such a friendly, and such a respectfull Manner, that he obliges us to say, we acknowledge his good Manners, though we may differ from him in his Arguments; and we shall add, that we shall be sure to treat him with the same Respect'.[52] Not all took heed of this encomium upon good manners though, Mist receiving a letter from one who 'among other foul Language, the Gentleman was pleased to use the Name of Scoundrel ... Mr Mist lets him know he contemns his Menaces'.[53] The idealised quality of amiability was not only a rule of conduct for disagreement, but also a way to curtail that same disagreement:

> Those among us who differ from one another, might be pleased to behave with such Decency and Respect to one another, as this Gentleman, and we do; it would certainly bring every Debate to a shorter Issue, and leave us at last in a perfect good Understanding with one another.[54]

Mist often presented political argument as unseemly, in opposition to the aims of the newspaper – in one place arguing that 'the Journal ... admits of a Question and an Answer, but not of a Dispute', and in another that 'the Proprietor of this Paper never had it in his Thoughts to turn it into a Paper of

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[52] Weekly Journal, 1 March 1718

[53] Weekly Journal, 20 February 1720.

[54] Weekly Journal, 1 March 1718. The concept of politeness is a much studied one: for some recent surveys, see L.E. Klein, 'Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century', Historical Journal 45 (2002), pp. 869-98; P. Langford, 'The uses of eighteenth-century politeness', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series, 12 (2002), pp. 311-31; M. Peltonen, 'Politeness and whiggism, 1688-732', Historical Journal 48 (2005), pp. 391-414; see also Chapter 6, below.

Controversy'.[55] This is in keeping with the vision of the public sphere as had been developed in the *Spectator*: Brian Cowan sees this not as 'an open forum for competitive debate between ideologies and interests, but rather as a medium whereby a stable socio-political consensus could be enforced'.[56] Yet to a regular reader of the newspaper these protestations would seem too much – 'uncontroversial' remains the last word one could use justly to describe them. Mist's journals do not celebrate a socio-political consensus; in fact the situation is quite the reverse. While the importance of eighteenth-century nostrums of 'politeness' in the conduct of newspaper correspondence, and to the world of newspaper politics in general, cannot be doubted, in Mist's case that politeness is employed subversively, a tory politeness to challenge a whig consensus.[57]

Letters to Messrs Mist and Fog

In any correspondence, there has to be at least two parties, the sender and the recipient (we will leave aside for the moment the third parties in this business, the readers of the newspaper). Who did these correspondents think they were corresponding with? Letters were addressed to Mr Mist, but was this the really existing printer and ex-sailor Nathaniel Mist? After all, no-one thought that letters addressed to Mr Fog were to a real person, any more than those to Mr Spectator had been to a man of flesh and blood and curious

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[55] Weekly Journal, 12 April 1718; 16 July 1720.
[56] B.W. Cowan, 'Mr Spectator and the coffeehouse public sphere', Eighteenth-Century Studies 37:3 (2004), p. 351.
[57] Cowan, 'Mr Spectator', p. 360. For further discussion of Mist's 'tory politeness', see Chapter 6, below.

surname. It was not the case that Mist was the principal writer of the newspaper, neither was there any sign that he himself wrote the replies published under his name. 'Mr Mist' was instead a fictional projection of the newspaper proprietor, an 'eidolon'.

While it is debatable how far Mr Spectator really had been born out of Addison and Steele's sense of 'canny self-protection', their need to hide real identities behind assumed ones, that particular motive cannot be ascribed to Nathaniel Mist's use of a fictionalised Mr Mist.[58] Who would use one's own name as a pseudonym? Separating the two is not always easy, as it is clear that Mr Mist shares many of the real-life experiences of Nathaniel Mist. We have already seen that both shared a maritime background. When Nathaniel Mist is threatened with violence for his tory beliefs, so is Mr Mist.[59] When Nathaniel Mist is imprisoned, Mr Mist writes ironically of the privations of confinement or, as he has it, 'my advantageous Situation for close Thinking'.[60]

Thus while there is a clear difference between Mist the printer and Mr Mist the conductor of a newspaper, the boundaries between the two could be indistinct, allowing both for some literary licence for the anonymous writers and for the personal identification of Nathaniel Mist with the newspapers he printed. The point is made by 'Conscientia' in his attack on Mist's support for the Jacobites:

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[58] A. Furtwangler, 'The making of Mr Spectator', Modern Language Quarterly 38 (1977), p. 21.
[59] Weekly Journal, 11 October 1718.
[60] 'The dedication', N. Mist, A collection of miscellany letters selected out fo the pages of Mist's Weekly Journal (4 vols, London, 1722-27), I, n.p.

> Mr Mist,
> They say you are in France, *it's no Matter for that*, what is published here is in your Name, and you are answerable for it, and may, if you please, answer to what is objected against it; for I suppose you see the Particulars.[61]

This letter pulls together many of the problems of identity in the newspaper correspondence. It is directed to 'Mr Mist' (though, as befitting the lack of cordiality in this particular letter, Conscientia feels no need for any formalities of address). It acknowledges that Nathaniel Mist is (at this point temporarily) not in the country and ascribes to him authority over, if not authorship of, the paper. Whether it would have been possible for Nathaniel Mist to approve the contents of the newspaper he owned while abroad assumes much of the efficiency of the Post Office and ignores the difficulties presented by the production cycle of a weekly newspaper, but Conscientia's point is clear. Nathaniel Mist must be held personally responsible and answer for the contents his paper. That this letter receives a reply from Mr Mist, even though both parties (and, presumably, the paper's wider readership) know Nathaniel Mist is out of the country, further illustrates the complications of the connection between Nathaniel Mist and his eidolon.

Unlike Mr Mist, there was no entangling of the real and the fictional with his post-crisis successor, 'Mr Fog' of *Fog's Weekly Journal*. While the newspaper was relaunched with a new title in 1728, continuity between the old *Mist's* and the new *Fog's* was firmly established, clearly linking the new paper to its predecessor, and establishing to the readers Mr Fog as a genuine replacement for and worthy heir to Mr Mist. A letter signed 'N. Mist'

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[61] Weekly Journal, 26 September 1719.

appeared in the first issue of *Fog's Weekly Journal*, addressed to his '*Dear Cousin Fog*', letting his kinsman and the readers of the *Weekly Journal* know that Mist had been 'lately seiz'd with an Apoplectick Fit, of which I instantly died'.[62] From Elysium, Mr Mist reminded him of their shared ancestry and the close connexions of the two families of Mist and Fog, and then detailed the instructions he would leave Fog as 'executor' of his estate:

> I desire that you will succeed me in the publick Character of a Writer, which Character I have many Years maintain'd, to the great Entertainment, and Education of my Countrymen. – If you tread in my Steps, you will rally Vice, Folly, and Affectation of every Species; you will recommend Merit where-ever you find it, whether in the Actions or Writings of Men: -- And I charge you particularly to keep *Keyber* under due Correction; have a strict Eye over him, and call him to Order, whenever he *steals*, that is to say, whenever he writes.[63]

This brief injunction serves several purposes in the wake of the changes forced upon the newspaper by government prosecution, which must have left its future in doubt. It reminds the reader of the previous form of the newspaper, at this point established as a mainstay of the opposition press for over a decade. It reiterates the self-defined purpose of the newspaper as a corrective scourge and censor. Its reference to 'Keyber' (the *Journal*'s nickname for whig playwright Colley Cibber, a regular recipient of the newspaper's ire[64]) reassures regular readers not only of a continuity of purpose, and a continuity of targets, but also a continuity of a variety of a shared language that involves the individual reader within a wider community

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[62] Fog's Weekly Journal, 28 September 1728. Of course, the fact that it was signed 'N. Mist' is no conclusive guarantee that it was the work of Nathaniel Mist.

[63] Fog's Weekly Journal, 28 September 1728.

[64] For Mist's vendetta against Colley Cibber, see Chapter 6, below.

of readership. It confirmed, in short, that things were being kept within the family.[65]

These Spectatorial spectres collapsed in the end. On 28 May 1737, issue number 446 of *Fog's Weekly Journal*, a letter of farewell appeared, signed 'N.M.' This was the last connection Nathaniel Mist was to have with the newspaper. The next week's issue, significantly beginning a new numbering sequence as issue one, reported that Mr Fog had died on 28 May, his nearest relative recording his last words:

> The little Effect my Lucubrations had on those stupid Animals, who barter'd their own and the Liberties of their Children for a trifling present Sum, which they were sure to repay with most exorbitant Usury; the Infirmities of old Age, and the Hand of Power, made me lay down all political Contests ... The many Prosecutions I have suffer'd in asserting the ancient Rights and Liberties of my dear Country, the Ignominious (as 'twas thought) Sentence pass'd upon me, and the Intrepidity I have shewn in pursuing the glorious Cause which animated me, to the impoverishing of my Fortune, are sufficient Proofs of my Attachment to the Interest of the Publick.[66]

These were rather bitter sentiments of defiance and refer to the personal experiences of Nathaniel Mist (although, once more, we do not know these were his actual words), conflating Nathaniel Mist and Mr Mist with Mr Fog, ignoring the distinction between them that had been made when the paper was relaunched in 1728. The final removal of Nathaniel Mist from any involvement with the newspapers coincided with the fictional death of his fictional eidolon, and indeed the actual death of Mist, from asthma later that year. The newspaper continued for twenty-one further issues, still as *Fog's*

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[65] It is possible that this reminder was aimed at advertisers as much as readers, in order to reassure them that the newspaper would appeal to the same audience for advertisements as before.

[66] Fog's Weekly Journal, 4 June 1737.

Weekly Journal, without the benefit of the literary device of a conductor behind the correspondence and essays, until it was announced that '*The Printer of the Paper being engaged to publish Common Sense, or the Englishman's Journal, Fog will appear no more after this Day – All Persons therefore that were serv'd with Fog shall be serv'd with Common Sense, and those who were used to advertise in Fog, if they will please to send their Advertisements to the same House, they shall be inserted with the same Care in Common Sense*'.[67] Unlike the continuity that had been established in the transition from *Mist's Weekly Journal* to *Fog's Weekly Journal*, this was an end to the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist. Only the business, the advertisers and subscribers, remained to be passed on.

Afterlife: reprinting in books and magazines

Unlike other aspects of the newspapers, the letters, poems, and other miscellany had a life outside the columns of the *Journal*. This material might be reprinted in other forms, in magazines and compilations. This was a common practice of the day, what has been referred to as the 'paradoxical function of *preserving* the *ephemeral*', repackaging periodical publication into a more permanent, more respectable form.[68]

In the preface to the first such collection of letters from Mist's newspaper, it was expected that the original authors would delight in 'seeing their Labours raised from Tea-Tables and Coffee-Houses, to places in

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[67] Fog's Weekly Journal, 29 October 1737.
[68] J.G. Altman, 'The letter book as a literary institution 1539-1789: towards a cultural history of published correspondences in France', Yale French Studies 71 (1986), p.18. Emphasis as in original.

Studies and Libraries ... when they should perceive Care was taken to extend the Lives of their Progeny, from a Week's Duration, to Immortality'.[69] This concern for the permanence and respectability has been seen as one of the innovations in journalistic technique pioneered by Sir Richard Steele with his rapid republication of the *Tatler* as a single volume, but there are earlier examples of similar practices, such as the collected editions of the *Gentleman's Journal* from the 1690s.[70]

The compilations were a popular publishing genre in the 1720s. The anti-government letters of 'Cato' (the pseudonym shared by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon), which appeared in the *London Journal* until the Walpole administration arranged the purchase of that newspaper, went through several editions.[71] Following the ministry's buy-out of the *London Journal* in 1724, the pro-government 'Atticus' took the place of Cato. His letters, republished in 1731, proved less popular, managing only the single

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[69] Mist, A collection of miscellany letters,I, p. ii.

[70] C. Winton, '*The Tatler*: from half-sheet to book', in J.A. Downie & T.N. Corns (eds), Telling people what to think: early eighteenth-century journals from the *Review* to the *Rambler* (London, 1993), pp. 23-33; P.A. Motteux, The Gentleman's Journal; or, the Monthly Miscellany (3 vols, London, 1692-4).

[71] After initial publication in the London Journal in 1723, Cato's Letters were republished seperately in 1724, 1734, 1737, 1748, and 1754. The most recent edition was published in 1995. Most subsequent commentary has focused on questions of political philosophy: R. Hamowy, 'Cato's letters, John Locke, and the republican paradigm', History of Poltical Thought 11 (1990), pp. 273-94; M.P. McMahon, The radical whigs, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon: libertarian loyalists to the new House of Hanover (Landham, MD, 1990); A. Mitchell, 'A liberal republican "Cato"', American Journal of Political Science 48 (2004), pp. 588-603; V.B. Sullivan, 'The civic humanist portrait of Machiavelli's English succesors', History of Political Thought 15 (1994), pp. 73-96. Very little has been made of Cato's publication history, but see G. Huxford, 'The English libertarian tradition in the colonial newspaper', Journalism Quarterly 45 (1968), pp. 677-86 on republication across the Atlantic.

edition.[72] Other newspapers that republished material in such a manner include *Read's Weekly Journal* and the *Daily Journal*.[73] But it was the republication of the whiggish and rationalist *Free-Thinker* in 1722-23 that was the immediate occasion for Nathaniel Mist's foray into this type of republication.[74]

The shift to a book format meant that the original letters had to conform to the expectations of the book-buying public, with all the extra apparatus that entailed, as is pointed out in the preface to the first volume of selected letters – 'Tell me, *Nat*, who do you dedicate to? Of what Nature are your Prefaces to be? Whether are we to have short summary Contents, or a copious Index?'[75] This meant new possibilities for the presentation of the material. While these letters could be read as a narrative of sorts, it is more likely that they were dipped into, the reader navigating the collections with such aids as the table of contents and the index. This could be used to further emphasise the rhetoric of the letters and the wider purpose of the collection as an anthology of political writing, as can be illustrated by two such entries:

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[72] [T. Cooke], The letters of Atticus, as printed in the London Journal, in the years 1729 and 1730, on various subjects, with an introduction, containing a short survey of public affairs from the time of the Spaniards besieging Gibraltar to the year 1731, and an enquiry into the reasons why some modern writers assume to themselves the great names of passed ages (London, 1731)

[73] 'October Greenwood', A collection of all the political letters in the Weekly Journal, or British Gazetteer (London, 1723); A collection of several curious pieces lately inserted in the Daily Journal (London, 1728); A collection of recipe's and letters lately inserted in the Daily Journal (London, 1730).

[74] [A. Phillips], The Free-thinker (London, 3 vols, 1722-3).

[75] Mist, A collection of miscellany letters, I, p. v.

Lying, *(political) the Art of it discuss'd,* 184 – *discourag'd by Tory Ministers,* Ibid – *encourag'd by the Whigs,* Ibid – *Qualifications requisite for it,* 185 – *Author of the Enquiry not a true Artist,* 186 – *whether lawful,* 188, 189 – *the Art defined,* 190

Ministers, *their common Excuse for bad Conduct,* 12, 13 – *supposed to grow wiser by Preferment,* 16 – *their Partizans often the worst Enemies to the Commonwealth,* 35 – *the present, libel'd by their own Writers,* 35, 36 – *not oblig'd now to understand State Affairs,* 42 – *what Talents the Publick expect in them,* 191 – *their Capacities how different,* 192[76]

A different method of extending the life of such articles became common from the 1730s with the appearance of magazines, the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731 followed by the rival *London Magazine* in 1732.[77] Whereas the previous compilation volumes had only contained essays from one

Table 6. Number of articles reprinted in *Gentleman's Magazine*, by newspaper

	1731	*1732*	*1733*	*1734*	*1735*	*1736*	*1737*	*Total*
Craftsman	50	53	50	53	50	46	40	342
Fog's Weekly Journal	47	49	42	40	32	29	11	250
London Journal	52	50	48	44	18	0	11	223
Grub Street Journal	46	48	41	28	26	12	9	210
Universal Spectator	45	48	36	33	23	15	10	210
Free Briton	49	49	42	40	24	0	0	204
Weekly Miscellany	0	2	42	34	28	14	10	130
Daily Courant	36	37	29	14	5	0	0	121
Daily Gazetteer	0	0	0	0	29	50	22	101
Weekly Register	35	32	0	0	0	0	0	67

[76] Anon., Select letters taken from Fog's Weekly Journal (2 vols, London, 1737), I, 'Index', n.p.

[77] C.L. Carson, The first magazine: a history of the *Gentleman's Magazine* (London, 1936); E.A. Reitan (ed.), The best of the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1731-1754 (Lewiston, N.Y., 1987), pp. 17-23.

Table 7. Number of articles reprinted in the *London Magazine*, by newspaper

	1732	*1733*	*1734*	*1735*	*1736*	*1737*	*Total*
Craftsman	36	50	51	52	49	44	282
Fog's Weekly Journal	31	46	45	44	44	17	227
Grub Street Journal	25	37	19	26	13	15	135
Universal Spectator	32	31	29	18	13	10	133
London Journal	39	38	21	16	12	0	126
Free Briton	35	32	17	11	0	0	95
Daily Gazetteer	0	0	0	22	46	22	90
Weekly Miscellany	0	13	20	21	10	10	74
Weekly Register	30	17	18	0	0	0	65
Common Sense	0	0	0	0	0	38	38

periodical, the magazines reprinted materials from all the newspapers published over a given month. This form of monthly anthology allowed readers to see the competing voices of the press side by side, retaining not just the articles, but also the wider context of a 'debate' or controversy.

Extracts from the essays and letters in *Fog's* that were regularly included in both magazines. Table 6, above, shows the number of times extracts from *Fog's* were presented by the *Gentleman's Magazine* in comparison to the other newspapers on the London market; Table 7 does the same for the *London Magazine*.[78] In both cases, the Tables are 'top tens' – for the sake of space and clarity, only the ten most common newspapers have been included. One thing this does obscure is the very different number of

[78] The Gentleman's Magazine (facsim. edn, 16 vols, London, 1998); The London Magazine (London, 1732-37).

individual titles covered by each magazine. In the period 1731-37, the *Gentleman's Magazine* includes articles from 34 different titles, including regional papers such as the *Newcastle Courant*, the *Northampton Mercury*, and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*. In contrast, the *London Magazine* only uses 22 titles, all from London. The selection of titles to be used could merely depend on what the magazines' compilers had to hand.

Both tables tell a similar story: in both cases only those from the *Craftsman* exceed the number of extracts taken from *Fog's*. The selection of which articles to include may have been an instance of party bias: a far greater number of articles from the pro-ministry newspapers appear in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and the *London Magazine* immediately carries a large number of articles from *Common Sense*, the newspaper that was intended to succeed *Fog's*. The personal politics of Grub Street may have also played a part: Edward Cave, the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, had worked for Nathaniel Mist after first arriving in London, while the *London Magazine* was published on behalf of the printer John Wilford, who had at one point also printed *Fog's*.[79] It may have been that the articles were considered to be more pleasing than those in other papers, to have possessed a greater appeal to the tastes of the eighteenth-century audience. The motives behind the selections made are not immediately obvious. However, the prominence of *Fog's Weekly Journal* cannot be doubted. The letters and essays that the newspaper contained clearly entertained and appealed, not only to the

[79] Carlson, The first magazine, pp. 7, 64.

readers of the individual issues of the paper, but also to others in a secondary market. What Mr Fog had to say for himself would clearly bear repeating.

Conclusion

The letters published in the weekly journals of Nathaniel Mist were a part of the newspaper's attempts to leaven the news coverage with other entertainments. This was in order to appeal most strongly to the newspaper-buying audience of eighteenth-century Britain. However, they should not just be seen as whimsical entertainments, or vehicles for party sentiment. Their existence points to how a newspaper could build up a sense of community around itself, even if the realities behind this impression of community may still have meant a circle of professional writers hidden behind a screen of punning names. The importance of the essentially fictional Messrs Mist and Fog were also a part of this and helped give the newspapers a sense of continuity over the twenty-one years they were published. While this chapter has not been overly concerned with the actual contents of the letters and essays, the subsequent chapters will use their contents to build up a picture of the newspaper's political identity. Part two of this study will build on this survey of what the letters represented and address the way they augmented the political, religious, and cultural biases of the newspaper. Part three will also build upon this present chapter, examining as it does one of these pseudonymous letters in close detail, the Persian Libel.

PART TWO

THE POLITICAL IDENTITY OF THE NEWSPAPER, 1716-1737

Chapter 4

'Do not degenerate into a Whig': the civil politics of the *Weekly Journal*[1]

Introduction

In its most general sense, everyone knows what politics means: parties and ideologies, men and measures. The present section of the thesis, consisting of this and the two succeeding chapters, seeks to build a clear picture of the political identity of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers. In order to do so, it has been necessary to make some arguably rather arbitrary distinctions. The politics of Mist's newspapers were not confined to the world of government and opposition, but were concerned also with theology and denomination, consumption and manners. In order to achieve a detailed, balanced view of the *Weekly Journal*'s political identity, each of these forms of politics – civil, ecclesiastical, and cultural – will be examined in turn.

By 'civil' politics are understood the institutions and appendages of the secular aspect of the British state: the Crown, parliament, and the political parties. This is the stuff of constitutional history.[2] It is important to

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[1] Mist's Weekly Journal, 21 December 1717.

[2] The consitutional history of the period is still best served by M.A. Thompson, A constitutional history of England, 1642-1801 (London, 1938), pp. 167-303. For how the constitution was viewed and used by eighteenth-century Englishmen, see H.T. Dickinson, Liberty and property: political ideology in eighteenth-century Britain (London, 1977), pp. 13-192; M. Goldie, 'The unacknowledged republic: officeholding in early modern England', in T. Harris (ed.), The politics of the excluded, c.1500-1850 (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 153-94; J.W. Gough, Fundamental law in English constitutional history (Oxford, 1955), pp. 174-91; J.P. Kenyon, Revolution principles: the politics of party, 1689-1720 (Cambridge, 1977); P. Langford, Public life and the propertied Englishman, 1698-1798 (Oxford, 1991); J.G.A. Pocock, The

note though that the use of the terms 'civil' and 'secular' does not entirely inoculate the discussion from questions of the divine. This is obviously inescapable for a newspaper so identified with Jacobitism, a creed with roots in a particularly strong form of theologically-informed politics.[3] For instance, one cannot sensibly discuss the newspaper's views on the nature of the crown without confronting the Jacobite view that the monarchy was of divine origin and that kingship was thus a sacred institution.[4]

It is this sort of political attitude that this chapter seeks to identify. By 'attitude' is meant something different and distinct from political principle. I take the latter to mean something precise and definite, a political philosophy as commonly understood. Examples of this could include the political principles of Jacobitism or neo-Roman republicanism.[5] They can be defined by the study of texts in the manner of J.G.A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner or Mark Goldie.[6] Political attitude is something slightly more fissiparous. It is the expression of these principles in a less precise formulation that can be expressed through a variety of languages and indeed genres and forms.

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ancient constitution and the feudal law: a study of English historical thought in the seventeenth century (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 362-87.

[3] For some historians, of course, all eighteenth-century politics are theologically-informed: J.C.D. Clark, English society 1688-1832: ideology, social structure, and political practice during the ancient regime (Cambridge, 1985), especially pp. 119-98.

[4] P.K. Monod, Jacobitism and the English people 1688-1788 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 17-27.

[5] For a succinct elucidation of 'neo-Roman' political principles, see Q. Skinner, Liberty before liberalism (Cambridge, 1998).

[6] J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition (Princeton, 1975); Q. Skinner, Visions of politics (3 vols, Cambridge, 2002); M. Goldie, 'The revolution of 1689 and the structure of political argument: an essay and an annotated bibliography of pamphlets on the allegiance controversy', Bulletin of Research in the Humanities 83 (1980), pp. 473-564.

Slightly more formally, one can borrow Pocock's terms and say that political attitudes are at a lower level of abstraction than political principles.[7]

In this manner, one can attempt to characterise a newspaper's arguments, to give them some coherence, without the need to imagine they must all represent and be adduced from one coherent body of political thought and acknowledging the often discordant chorus of voices that can be found in its columns. This chapter will attempt to map the contours of the attitudes staked out by the newspaper towards the central pillars of political life in the early eighteenth century, but focusing mainly on the place of the Crown in British political life following the Hanoverian Succession of 1714. In order to do this, it is necessary to also look at the methodologies that historians have tended to employ when studying the political identities of eighteenth-century newspapers and the problems encountered when using such texts as material for the history of ideas.

Politics of press and party: classification or particularism

When discussing the political identity of a newspaper, the most common approach by far has been to understand the paper as an extension of a political party. Historians have spent much time elucidating what whig, tory, and Jacobite principles were, by reference to publications, speeches, and political activity.[8] Knowing these, newspapers can then be identified and

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[7] J.G.A. Pocock, 'The history of political thought: a methodological enquiry', in P. Laslett & W.G. Runciman (eds), Philosophy, politics and society (Second series, Oxford, 1972), pp. 185-7.

[8] R. Browning, Political and constitutional ideas of the court whigs (Baton Rouge, 1982); L. Colley, In defiance of oligarchy: the tory party, 1714-60

classified as whig, tory, or Jacobite, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of what the newspaper must have stood for and what it would have argued. The only trouble then is to decide on the correct label for the newspapers – not entirely an unproblematic activity, as can be seen by the way Nathaniel Mist's newspapers are variously labelled 'Jacobite', 'tory', 'high tory', or 'high church'.[9] While for some commentators such imprecision in the scheme of classification would not present a problem, seeing those terms as essentially synonymous, for those who stress the variety of political thought and political responses to the Hanoverian regime such elisions can only confuse the matter further.[10]

However, one must remember that not only is this approach common, but it is also how eighteenth-century writers and readers understood the situation. Mist himself wrote of other papers being for the whigs, of whig approaches to news writing. Sometimes he took for himself the appellation of

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(Cambridge, 1982), pp. 85-117; Dickinson, Liberty and property, pp. 13-90; M. Goldie, 'The roots of true whiggism, 1688-94', History of Political Thought 1 (1980), pp. 195-236; T. Harris, Politics under the later Stuarts: party conflict in a divided society, 1660-1715 (Harlow, 1993), pp. 147-75; Kenyon, Revolution principles; Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, pp. 15-92.

[9] For example, *Mist's Weekly Journal* is tory in J. Black, The English press in the eighteenth century (London, 1987), pp. 119-20, but Jacobite in J. Hoppit, A land of liberty? England 1689-1727 (Oxford, 2000), p. 415. G.C. Gibbs perhaps sensibly hedges his bets with 'Jacobitish', Gibbs, 'Government and the English press, 1695 to the middle of the eighteenth century', in A.C. Duke & C.A. Tamse (eds), Too mighty to be free: censorship and the press in Britain and the Netherlands (Zutphen, 1987), p. 95.

[10] L. Colley, In defiance of oligarchy makes clear that were varieties of toryism in the years of the whig supremacy, *pace* E. Cruickshanks, Political untouchables: the tories and the '45 (London, 1979), p. 6. J.G.A. Pocock, 'The varieties of whiggism from exclusion to reform: a history of ideology and discourse', in J.G.A. Pocock, Virtue, commerce, history: essays in political thought and history, chiefly in the eighteenth century (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 215-310, makes the equal and opposite point for the whigs.

'tory', or it was granted to him in letters from readers.[11] Conversely, at other times he denied that he was tory, and joined with Bolingbroke as seeing whig and tory as a false distinction in the new political world of the Walpole administration.[12]

However, as an approach to the intellectual history of newspapers, this is not in itself sufficient. As we have seen, such a classification can be imprecise, not least because so many labels can be used, each with its own set of preconceived implications. None are necessarily misleading or inaccurate, but their lack of precision can leave one with only an impression of what was argued, and why. More fundamentally, such an approach is at one step removed from the evidence at hand, the extant copies of the newspaper. It can mislead the historian as much as anybody else: Mist was a Jacobite, therefore his papers were Jacobite, and a stress is laid upon those articles which bear interpretation as Jacobite texts, while others in counterpoint are downplayed.

An alternative strategy is to begin with the contents of the newspapers themselves, to see what they say without first determining how they fit into a pre-existing scheme of classification. The historian should seek to understand what was being said and what sense it made in its particular

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[11] 'J.W.' signs himself Mist's '*Fellow-Tory*', Mist's Weekly Journal, 14 October 1727.

[12] For Bolingbroke's views on the matter, see Bolingbroke, Henry St John, Viscount, A dissertation upon parties; in several letters to Caleb D'Anvers, Esq (3rd edn, London, 1735), pp. 4-11; H.T. Dickinson, Bolingbroke (London, 1970), pp. 196-97. Such a stance from Mist's papers predates both Walpole's rise to pre-eminence and Bolingbroke's return to British politics. For example, a poem describes whigs and tories as two sets of rats squabbling over the same ball of cheese, Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, 7 December 1717.

context. Such an approach would be influenced by recent trends in the history of ideas, most notably the work of Quentin Skinner.[13]

When the text in question is a newspaper, new problems arise, problems which have rarely been discussed. Superficially, there should be no methodological difference. We have the texts: the words are there, on the paper. They have not been printed in a manner somehow different to any other printed medium. They also have their meanings, knowable through a study of their context and intentions. One could subject an essay from *Mist's*, or *Fog's*, or the *Craftsman*, or any other effusion of the eighteenth-century press, to an examination in the manner that Skinner approaches *Leviathan*. In fact, this should be essential anyway, as part of the operation of salvaging the wider context:

> Languages or discourses ... are *not* limited to elite productions, a few 'great texts'. The great texts are written in idioms or rhetoric which may be shared with many not-so-great texts of the most varied provenance: occasional pamphlets, cheap novels, newspapers – they are all grist to the intellectual historian's mill.[14]

One might be tempted to wonder how busy this mill actually is. It is clear that Annabelle Brett's observation places the newspaper firmly in a supporting role, one to confirm that and illustrate how the intellectual

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[13] Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', History and Theory 8 (1969), pp. 3-53; J. Tully (ed.), Meaning and context: Quentin Skinner and his critics (Cambridge, 1998); Q. Skinner, Visions of politics, esp. vol. 1, 'Regarding method'; A. Brett, 'What is intellectual history now?', in D. Cannadine (ed.), What is history now? (Basingstoke, 2002). Alternative contemporary approaches to intellectual history can be charted in R. Chartier, 'Intellectual history or sociological history? The French trajectories', in D. LaCapra & S.L. Kaplan (eds), Modern European intellectual history: reappraisals and new perspectives (Ithaca, New York, 1982), pp. 13-46; M. Richter, The history of political and social concepts: a critical introduction (Oxford, 1995).

[14] Brett, 'What is intellectual history now?', p. 118. Emphasis as in original.

historian has correctly construed the idiom of a particular discourse. We cannot know this solely through the internal evidence of the great works, as they 'did not invent the languages in which they speak ... and hence making sense of what they are about can never be limited to their study alone'.[15] True enough, in certain regards we can treat these texts as one might a *roman à clef*, but this suggestion is not entirely satisfactory. One is left to ask how exactly the meaning of the language of the newspaper and other 'not-so-great texts' – pamphlets, novels, plays, poetry – is to be ascertained, until eventually the argument must float on the reasonableness of the historian's interpretation.

However, this study does not understand the newspaper as being cast in such a subordinate supporting role. Instead, it asks how one ought to use newspapers as primary texts in intellectual history. Could one possibly hope do the same for every article ever printed in the twenty-year existence of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers? Could one locate the general principles of a newspaper in such a way? Several problems must be confronted: issues of authorship and periodicity, but especially ones of coherence and consistency.

There can be an extraordinary demand on the part of readers – both scholars and interested generalists alike – for an author to be consistent across all his works. A set of principles adduced, a system of thought produced, and a label applied – civic humanist, court whig, liberal, there are plenty to choose from. Where discontinuities – of style, of form, of intention –

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[15] Brett, 'What is intellectual history now?', p. 118.

can easily be accepted in other fields, in the history of ideas they form knots the historian must account for. There often appears to be no room for an acceptable level of inconsistency.[16]

Skinner discusses how 'the writing of the history of moral and political philosophy is pervaded by this mythology of coherence'.[17] The desire for this coherence can mean that when such a coherent set of beliefs seems to be lacking it will 'become dangerously easy for the historian to treat it as his or her task to supply these texts with the coherence they may appear to lack'.[18] Of course, Skinner is here concerned with the unnatural imposition of coherence on a body of work by one single author, a 'procedure which gives the thoughts of the major philosophers a coherence, and an air generally of a closed system, which they may never have attained or even aspired to attain'.[19] The problem the historian of the newspaper is confronted with is of a slightly different, although essentially comparable, order.

As discussed in Part One, the newspaper is the product of a multitude of voices, mostly anonymous or pseudonymous. Such phrases as 'Mist wrote that' or 'Fog argued that', when writing of the newspaper, can only ever be meaningfully understood as convenient shorthand. The newspaper is also primarily an ephemeral, serial text, never intended to be a lasting, definitive statement of a political theory and presumably not understood by its original audience in that manner. To write then that, for example, the

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[16] This is not to say that seeming inconsistencies in a group of texts by the same author cannot or should not be reconciled, but that such an exercise would constitute philosophy rather than history.
[17] Skinner, Visions of politics, I, p. 67.
[18] Skinner, Visions of politics, I, p. 68.
[19] Skinner, Visions of politics, I, p. 68.

Weekly Journal itself represents a shift in Jacobite political principles away from divine right to a contractarian doctrine is to mistake one line of argument for the contents of the entire newspaper.[20] A first step towards a more inclusive discussion of the newspapers' political identity would be to distinguish between the personal politics of Nathaniel Mist and the public positions of his newspaper. The easiest way to do this is to begin with the fundamental crux of Nathaniel Mist's political creed, the legitimacy of the Stuart claim to the British throne.

Private politics and public arguments: attitudes towards the Crown

The prevalent view of the political identity of the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist has to a certain extent been dominated by one interpretation of the changing nature of Jacobite political argument during the reign of George I. This interpretation understands Jacobitism as shifting away from seventeenth-century concern for divine right and marching bravely into the new contractarian age of the eighteenth. These were, to use a contradictory phrase, 'whig Jacobites':

> They allowed that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had been valid, but argued that the Hanoverian monarch had broken the new contract by which government had been refounded after its dissolution in 1688, and could therefore be replaced. It was reasonable to turn again to the Stuart royal family, which in the

[20] That Mist's newspapers represented such a shift is a central argument of P.M. Chapman, 'Jacobite political argument in England, 1714-1766', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1984). This view has since been followed by later scholars, for example Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, pp. 23-38; P.K. Monod, 'Whatever happened to divine right? Jacobite political argument, 1689-1753', in G. Schochet (ed.), Politics, politeness, and patriotism (Washington, D.C., 1993), pp. 209-27.

> past had governed well, and could now be expected to have learnt a lesson from its more recent misfortunes.[21]

Mist's newspapers have been understood to be at the forefront of this avant-garde Jacobitism. Any discussion of the political attitude of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers towards questions of the Crown, kingship, and sovereignty revolve around the issue of Jacobitism – and indeed Mist's personal Jacobitism was quite clear. Indeed, his own political beliefs are those we can reconstruct with the greatest clarity, the evidence for them preserved in his letters to the Jacobite court. James Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender, was King by right of inheritance and providence and Mist possessed 'a Heart entirely devoted to the good Cause' of a second Restoration.[22] One letter from Mist addressed to the Stuart claimant, while of course written in the position of a supplicant following his hasty retreat to the continent, makes clear his somewhat romantic attachment to the man he sees as his rightful king:

> I have receiv'd such a Mark of your Royal Favour in the gracious Letter you was pleas'd to send me, that has more than rewarded me for all my sufferings, and from which I shall draw Comfort in any future Extremity that I may possibly fall under, for my Endeavours to serve your Majesty. If I should neglect any opportunity of proceeding my Resentments against those hatefull Enemies of your Cause and Country, tho' your Majesty would be so good as to dispense with my Duty in that Respect, yet I should hardly ever be

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[21] Chapman, 'Jacobite political argument in England', p. 12. While Chapman uses the term 'whig Jacobite' with some clarity, it was not a common term of the time: the only man who claimed the mantle of both whig and Jacobite and to have successfully reconciled the two was the unfortunate Duke of Wharton, son of the Williamite Earl of Wharton, defender of Bishop Atterbury, and Mist's collaborator in sedition. The phrase was used once in the Weekly Journal, to describe a whig who refused to spit while cursing the Stuart pretender, thus raising the suspicions of his fellows as to his whig bona fides.

[22] 'Charles Luden' [i.e. Mist] – Stuart, 8 September 1728, Windsor, Royal Archives (R.A.), Stuart Papers, 120/30.

> able to forgive my self. My ready Obedience to your Royal Commands will prove my Loyalty; and I humbly take leave to assure your Majesty, that pursuent thereto, I shall with an exceeding great Pleasure, communicate any thing that may occur to me for your Service to Colonel Obrian [*sic*], and receive his Directions in any Affair wherein I may be ever so little useful, with that Zeal that becomes one who has the happiness of being
> Sir,
> Your Majesty's most humble and most dutiful Subject and Servant
> Nathaniel Mist[23]

Nowhere in his correspondence does Mist suggest that the Stuart claim is legitimated by a contract between subjects and sovereign. His private reasoning, as far as is revealed by his letters to the Stuart court in exile, centres on notions of loyalty and right and do not seem to constitute a break in Jacobite thought.

However, private reasons could not be made public arguments in the pages of his newspapers. One does not publish one's treason, or the arguments in favour of that treason. It is important to remember there are no explicitly Jacobite arguments to be found anywhere in the *Weekly Journal*, regardless of whether they are old- or new-fashioned. To have made any would have been to invite prosecution for high treason.[24] What Paul Chapman interprets as Jacobite argument is only ever implicit.

Chapman's methodology is essentially interpretive, one of translating hidden intentions, and ultimately reliant on the exegetical skill of the commentator – for instance, when writing of the *True Briton*, he says in a telling phrase that 'despite the involvement of the Jacobite duke of Wharton, I

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[23] Mist – Stuart, 19 September 1728, Stuart Papers 120/96.
[24] As Mist well knew, having taken such a close interest in the dismal fate of the printer of the explicitly Jacobite tract, Vox populi, vox dei (London, 1719) – see Chapter 1, above.

have not been able to discern any specifically Jacobite content in it'.[25] This of course would not stop it being a publication that Jacobites would be able to read with appreciation or view as sympathetic with their cause. It is possible though to disentangle the implicit political principle, which is Jacobite, and the explicit political attitude, which is similar to but not actually Jacobite.

An alternative position has been suggested by the work of Andrew Pettit. Pettit uses the term 'Carolinism', a term that does not stress the return to the throne of the Stuart family, but rather emphasises the Stuart role in the constitutional history of Britain, particularly contrasting Charles I and Archbishop Laud to the solidly secular George I and Walpole.[26] As Pettit puts it, there was besides the ministerial writers and the Bolingbrokean opposition 'a third strand of polemicists, Stuart-sympathizers but not Jacobites in any useful sense of the term, [who] abhorred the [Glorious] Revolution and its modern apologists and thus were opposed with equal vehemence to Walpole and "Caleb"'. Pettit calls such people Carolinists 'because of their mythopœic attachment to the reign of King Charles I ... and their fascination with the regicide that ended it'.[27]

There is not, however, so clean a division between Jacobitism and 'Carolinism' as Pettit would suggest. Indeed, one of his examples is Mathias Earberry, a writer one can with certainty call Jacobite (and one whose work had been printed and published by Mist).[28] Such an oppositional language,

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[25] Chapman, 'Jacobite political argument', p. 54.
[26] A. Pettit, Illusory consensus: Bolingbroke and the polemical response to Walpole, 1730-37 (London, 1997), p. 27.
[27] Pettit, Illusory consensus, p. 90.
[28] Pettit, Illusory consensus, p. 90.

more properly nostalgic than revivalist, could be seen as fair comment – after all, it was from the House of Stuart that the claim of the Hanoverians originated. Jospeh Addison delighted in pointing this out to the Old Pretender in the pages of *The Freeholder*: 'You say they [the House of Hanover] are *distant in Blood*, whereas no Body ever doubted that King *George* is great Grandson to King *James* the First, though many believe that you are not son to King *James* the Second'.[29] However, this also meant that pro-Hanoverians could not entirely repudiate the historical legitimacy of the Stuarts. Carolinism was a legally-acceptable public face for Mist's private Jacobitism. Such an approach did not limit itself to apologetics, but extended into hagiography. Here, then, is one of the political attitudes of the *Weekly Journal* towards the British crown, an anti-Hanoverianism rooted in a defence of Charles I and the House of Stuart.

This was especially important in the early years of the newspaper, as it forged an identity for itself within the London newspaper market. In the *Weekly Journal*, one could read of sermons castigating the 'Calves Head' men who ridiculed the execution of Charles I.[30] The next week, one man identified as a whig and friend to the court was reportedly attacked by a mob for lighting candles in his window on the anniversary of the execution: the paper was ambiguous as to what moral should be drawn.[31] In these early

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[29] J. Addison, The Free-holder. Or, political essays (3rd edn, London, 1723), p. 49.
[30] Weekly Journal, 2 February 1717. Like earlier outré groups, such as the Mohocks, the Calves-Head Clubs have been seen as much as a scare got up by 'tabloid journalism' as actually existing institutions – A. Lacey, The cult of King Charles the Martyr (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 208-9.
[31] Weekly Journal, 9 February 1717.

days, this regard for the House of Stuart also played a part in the Grub Street conflicts between Mist and the Scottish whig proprietor of the *Flying Post*, George Ridpath. One correspondent, identified as 'R.S.', sent Mr Mist some reflections on a scandalous attack that had appeared in the *Post*:

> No Man sure, except the Flying-Post, would have defamed the whole Race of the Kings of his Fathers. The Family of the Stuarts were raised by their Virtues, and they ever graced that Throne, to which it exalted them. Would any one but Ridpath, the scandalous Ridpath, have raked the Kennels of Slander to blacken a brave Family that were Sovereigns of that Country, which, to her eternal Shame, must own Ridpath to be born in her? This is the Recompence that this Wretch can afford the Royal Line of the Stuarts, for first breaking his savage Ancestors into Men, for erecting wholesome Laws, for their gentle and indolent Administration, and for the Protection that their Subjects ever enjoyed under them. The blood of the Royal Martyr ... shed in our Streets, in defence of the Church, and his Subjects Liberties, the Sufferings of his exile Children, and the Victories of her Grandaughter (all fresh in our Memories) deserve better Quarter.[32]

Paul Chapman has noticed such nostalgia for the House of Stuart. In his view, it was a rhetoric aimed at justifying a Jacobite restoration once the Hanoverians had successfully been deposed for breaking the contract between Crown and People agreed on in 1688: the Stuarts had ruled with distinction in the past and could again, not all Stuarts being of the temperament of James II.[33] However, as the letter from R.S. suggests, the status of Charles I as the 'Royal Martyr' was a vital one in this context and one that disappears in Chapman's discussion of the phenomenon. Such sanguinary sentiments do not fit too neatly with his concept of a new 'whig Jacobitism'. One of the most visible aspects of this Carolinism was the

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[32] Weekly Journal, 12 July 1718.
[33] Chapman, 'Jacobite political argument', pp. 261-2.

newspaper's small devotion to the cult of Charles I as a martyr for the Church of England.[34]

Following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, space had been found in the revised Book of Common Prayer of 1662 for a solemn day of remembrance on the anniversary of the king's death. It was to be a day of national atonement for national sin, the collect for morning prayers typical of the tone:

> Most mighty God ... who in thy heavy displeasure didst suffer the life of our late gracious Soveraign to be this day taken away by wicked Hands; We, thy unworthy servants, humbly confess, that the sins of this Nation have been the cause which hath brought this heavy judgment upon us ... lay not the guilt of this innocent bloud ... to the charge of the people of this land, nor let it ever be required of us, or our posterity.[35]

This language found its mirror in a letter complaining of growing popular apathy, an apathy that was not restricted to the whig descendants of the republicans and regicides, towards the proper solemnity that should be afforded to such a day:

> There are Numbers of People, who have merry Meetings on the 30th of January; not in a ludicrous barbarous Manner to trample on the Blood of the Blessed Martyr, or to insult the Piety and Authority of their Governors; but because neither their Families nor themselves had any Hand in that horrid rebellion against, and bloody Murther of the Lord's Anointed: Therefore, they think, they are excused from the Humiliation enjoined on that Day. But pray, Mr Mist, do the lawful Commands of our Superiors stand for

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[34] V. Staley, 'The commemoration of King Charles the martyr', Liturgical Studies (1907), pp. 66-83; H.W. Randall, 'The rise and fall of a matyrology: sermons on Charles I', Huntington Library Quarterly 10 (1947), pp. 135-67; B. Stewart, 'The cult of the royal martyr', Church History 38 (1969), pp. 175-87; Kenyon, Revolution principles, pp. 61-82; Lacey, The cult of King Charles the Martyr.

[35] 'The Thirtieth day of January, being the day of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First', The book of common prayer, as revised and settled at the Savoy Conference, Anno. 1662, 14 Charles II (London, 1844), n.p.

> nothing? Are these Gentlemen sure that sacred Blood is so fully atoned for, that it will never more be required of us or our Posterity? We have not indeed murdered a King since; but when the same Principles, which led to that most abominable Fact then, are propagated still amongst us with the greatest Heat and Obstinacy, may we not fear God will visit for these Things? Will not National Sins bring down National Punishments?[36]

Such essays became a regular feature of the newspaper around the end of January.[37] As Lacey has pointed out, 'the survival of the Fast Day itself ensured that once a year the whole question of the origins of government, the grounds of obedience, the boundaries of resistance, and the nature of rebellion and regicide would be rehearsed and debated'.[38] One such rehearsal space was to be found in the pages of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers, which should not be seen as offering a single 'party line', but where alternative lines could be played out. An important feature of this debate was the passionate rhetoric of those who argued from traditional, Carolinist positions.

On one occasion that the newspaper was actually published on the thirtieth itself, the contents of the newspaper were dominated by reflections on the meaning of the anniversary. One writer took advantage of the coincidence of press and prayer book to contribute an essay on 'that dolorous Day, on which we celebrate the lamentable Memorial of a Royal Martyr'. Charles I was a man who could bear comparison in quick succession to Joseph, Moses, Solomon and King David. This letter stressed the importance of national unity, achievable through 'a conscientious Communion with the King in the National way, which is reasonable, religious, known and

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[36] Weekly Journal, 14 February 1719.
[37] Though not an inevitable feature. The essay in the Weekly Journal for 30 January 1725 is an attack on the pantomime.
[38] Lacey, The cult of King Charles the Martyr, p. 174.

Christian, peaceable, holy, and commended'. Furthermore, this conscientious communion had not been achieved with George I, 'our National Divisions now, as was for Israel of old, there is, and will be grievous Sorrow and Searchings of Heart and among all Loyal Churchmen'.[39]

A poem published in the same issue, by 'Cavalier', '*in Caroli primi decollationem*' continued the mournful theme of Britain's continuing suffering in more-or-less adequate rhyme that 'Dethron'd by's Subjects, STUART is no more, / And Heav'n sure can't have greater Plagues in Store; / Why shou'd we then fresh Curses imprecate? / The Sin it self's a Punishment too great, / We feel, and groan beneath the sinking Weight'.[40] This theme of divine punishment for regicide was then not only an institutionalised memory of the divisions of the previous century, but also a lament for the state of Britain under George I. As one Caroline memorialist wrote, '*by a sad and woeful Experience, we have felt the dismal Effects and Consequences of it* [i.e. God's judgment], *in the publick Discontents and Disturbances of this divided and unhappy Kingdom*'.[41]

This particular meme of the newspaper's store of rhetoric, emphasising as it does the sacred nature of the British monarchy, and a quasi-mystical link between the fortunes of the rightfully ordained king and the fortunes of his country, does not fit well with the suggestion that Mist's newspapers were the messengers of a new Jacobitism, that looked to Locke rather than the Lord

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[39] Weekly Journal, 30 January 1720.
[40] Weekly Journal, 30 January 1720.
[41] Weekly Journal, 25 January 1724. Italics as in original. The emphasis on the corporate guilt of the entire nation was a commonplace of Charles's martyrology – Lacy, The Cult of King Charles the Martyr, p. 180.

for its legitimacy. It is undeniable that there were items in the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist that argued such a stance. This, however, should not distract from the overwhelming Carolinism of its political attitude towards the British crown.

Indeed, space could be given over within the paper for contractarian views to be dismissed out of hand. One could dismiss contracts as so much theory, entirely unsuited for the patriarchal role of the monarch, who must superintend his people in the way a father and master supervises his household.[42] One could instead assert that traditional tory values were superior, that 'Religion lays the Foundation of Obedience and Non-resistance as the most rational Principle'.[43] One might also follow one correspondent, signing himself 'Loyalty', in asking the following question:

> If I were a Person who believed the People of this Kingdom to be the constant Original of the King's Power, and (as an unavoidable Consequence thereof) that he was resistable; that I am a Part of that Power which is King of this King ... That he is but the Executioner of those Laws, that I and my Fellow Members should think fit to set him, and so that we are his Governours: That his Authority is ours, and the only Obligation for our Obedience to him is Interest, and therefore the Succession of the Crown was, or ought to be settled, on such Conditions as we thought fit to make: How could I go to Church, and make my solemn Address to God by calling him, *King of Kings* ... meaning Sovereign? ... How could I pray for him as my *supream Governour*? And beg of God that I might consider the King had His (God's) Authority, and therefore that I might humbly obey the King *in God*, *and for God*, *according to his blessed Word and Ordinance*? ... I say, how could I retain the former Opinion, and do all this without being a most solemn wicked Hypocrite?[44]

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[42] Weekly Journal, 9 August 1718.
[43] Weekly Journal, 27 September 1718.
[44] Weekly Journal, 28 May 1720.

This passionate Carolinism was not, however, a feature that outlasted the events of the Persian Libel crisis of 1728 and the relaunching of the newspaper as *Fog's Weekly Journal*. It has been common to see the Jacobitism of *Mist's Weekly Journal* as less of a pre-occupation for *Fog's*.[45] Articles memorialising the Stuarts were far rarer, especially the more emotional elements of martyrology that had so marked *Mist's*. Freed from the immediate oversight of Nathaniel Mist, the retitled paper cast off the rough manners of Jacobitism and took on a more the more refined air of simple opposition to a whig regime conducted by Walpole, as opposed to his monarch.

Stuart-related articles were not entirely absent from the refashioned newspaper, as occasionally Fog would take note of how 'an extream Rancour every now and then breaks out against the *Royal Family* of the *STUARTS*, as if the Authors thought of making their Court, by abusing and insulting the *Memories* of the *best-natur'd* PRINCES that have sat upon any Throne in Europe'.[46] However, such apologies for princes now concentrated on the restored son rather than the martyred father. This shift raises another important problem when using newspapers as texts in the history of political thought, a problem of continuity of thought.

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[45] For Monod, Fog's Weekly Journal represents the 'high tide' of Jacobite accomodation with whig political argument, Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, p. 33.

[46] Fog's Weekly Journal, 16 August 1729.

Changing titles, changing tempers

That there was a distinct shift of political identity in 1728 was certainly a verdict of the time, subsequently taken up and endorsed by historians of press politics. Viscount Bolingbroke, reacting against what appeared to be a Jacobite argument in *Fog's Weekly Journal*, certainly saw this distinction:

> If this wretched production had appeared in Mist's Journal, I should have felt neither surprise nor concern. That writer never wore so much as the mask of liberty; and showed his game so plainly, that, whatever he got by faction, faction could get nothing by him. But Fog, who writes incomparably better, hath appeared to write with a much better design. Those who are the warmest in the national interest, without regard to persons, and independently of all factions, have made this judgment of him; and therefore I was surprised and concerned to find, that he exposed himself even once or in any degree to the same reproach, that was frequently and justly made to his predecessor.[47]

This judgement of Bolingbroke's – which continues one of the difficulties discussed in Chapter Three, the identification of 'Mr Fog' as one particular writer, rather than a school of scribblers – while often endorsed by later commentators was not universally shared. Friends to the Walpole administration for one were happy to understand Mr Fog's essays as exercises in Jacobite sermonizing. John, Lord Hervey, certainly felt that *Fog's* reputation as a Jacobitical newspaper was sufficient enough to lend credence to the government's line that the *Craftsman* and its followers were also in the van with the Stuart cause:

> [The writers of the *Craftsman*] were perpetually declaring themselves not Jacobites, but Patriots; they gave up *Fog* for such; but at the same Time, that they were treading in his Steps, talking in his Style, and fighting under his Banner, they professed an

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[47] Bolingbroke, Henry St John, Viscount, The works of the late right honourable Henry St John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke (8 vols, London, 1809), II, pp. 138-9.

> Abhorrence to his Cause: As if the whole World must not perceive, that their only Option was owning themselves Knaves enough to be the Tools of it.
>
> However they abjured *Fog*'s Appellation, and stuck to their own; so that this Sect of Patriots was to Jacobites, what Socinians were to Arians, and Pironists to Scepticks; they preach'd the same Doctrine, and held the same Tenets, but took a different Name, and endeavoured, by the subtle Sophistry of Words, logically to prove a Distinction, where there is essentially no Difference.[48]

This reverses the usual relationship between the two opposition newspapers. Where most commentators have *Fog's* as a subordinate part of the literary opposition, Hervey inverts this processional order, having the *Craftsman* stepping along a path beaten by *Fog's*. Elsewhere similar accusations were levelled (possibly by the same hand), castigating the *Craftsman* with *Fog's* treason, 'and if I should be called upon to quote Chapter and Verse, I may perhaps endeavour to prevail on a *Jacobite* Neighbour of mine, to procure me a compleat Set of those traiterous Libels from Mr. *Fog* and Mr. *Franklin*, for that Purpose'.[49]

It has proved possible then to see the crisis of 1728 leading to a 'hard' discontinuity between the political attitudes of *Mist's* and *Fog's*, an excision of Jacobite excess. It is also possible to see it as a change truly superficial. The former view is by far the more commonly held. It is important to note though, that Nathaniel Mist himself remained an influential figure in the production of *Fog's Weekly Journal*, that he continued using it as an outlet for his political opinions, and that it was still considered a Jacobite-friendly newspaper by the Jacobites themselves.

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[48] [John, Lord Hervey], Observations on the writings of the *Craftsman* (London, 1730), p. 16.
[49] [John, Lord Hervey?], Sedition and defamation display'd: in a letter to the author of the *Craftsman* (London, 1731), p. 11.

Nathaniel Mist in his French exile was not entirely unconcerned with the remodelled newspaper, as evidenced by the correspondence he maintained with the Jacobite court. He could report to the Pretender's court that *Fog's* was preparing an answer to a pamphlet written by Sir Robert Walpole,[50] Not all of Mist's efforts at news management were successful: he warned the court that, while he would make every effort to have published a story concerning the election of the king of Poland, 'I have been sometimes disappointed in such a Case'. He also makes clear that he 'would choose to have it in a Whig paper', which suggests a certain sophistication of news management, more so than is usually attributed to Jacobite involvement with the London press.[51]

Mist's use of whig newspapers in this manner was a common tactic of his during this period of indirect influence over the contents of the London newspapers, writing once that 'the Paragraph relating to the Death of Mr Williams I sent directly to London and order'd it to be put into several Papers particularly two which are not much in our Interest that is the Daily Journal and the Whitehall Evening Post and that Fog's Journal should take it from them'.[52] Following the death of the Old Pretender's wife in 1735, Mist inveigled an obituary into the papers by a similarly circuitous route:

> I suppose Sir you may have seen the Queen's Character and Death in Fog's Journal as you desired, but I first got it inserted in a Whig Paper, that all Mankind might receive the same Impression from it comes unprejudiced that way to our Enemies, and 'tis a piece of Art I often make use of, and I think a very innocent one. I believe

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[50] Mist – [Edgar?], 8 February 1731, R.A., Stuart Papers 142/141,
[51] Mist – Edgar, 24 April 1733, R.A., Stuart Papers, 161/16.
[52] Mist – Edgar, 23 August 1733, R.A., Stuart Papers, 164/79.

> my Correspondence is not the more suspected for it. I am sure my Whig Friends do not suspect me of their Party.[53]

Such concerns on Mist's part to attempt to mediate how the events of the Jacobite court were covered in the British press extended to discretion as well as discussion. Following one of the regular convulsions of the Stuart court-in-exile, one repudiated Jacobite courtier threatened to publish a vindication of his actions should his conduct be publicly criticised by the court. Mist's reaction was clear, as 'having the good Cause first at Heart, I look'd upon it as a Duty in me to prevent as much as in me lay such a Matter passing into the Publick Papers'.[54] The manoeuvrings that this led Mist into give some idea, not only of the way news travelled across national boundaries, but also how eighteenth-century journalistic technique could be lend itself to such manipulation, with its relative unconcern for scrupulous investigation of its sources:

> I have endeavour'd to give it a Discredit, by falling upon the Dutch Papers as a Paris Correspondent for an English News Paper, for spreading false News to the Publick, chiefly insisting upon the various and contradictory Accounts given of the Turks and Persians, and then draws in as a corroborating Instance their Article from Rome to prove the Charge. In short Sir I have interwove it with other things so as they might be answer'd without any apparent Design and this in a daily Paper, after the Paragraph, which you sent, shall have been published.
>
> I presume Sir there can be no harm done in taking this Precaution, for tho' the Dutch Article with which the English will be furnish'd appears inconsistent and unreasonable in itself, yet will People be led away with one Notion of the Matter, and have their own Reasonings upon it, so that I thought it necessary not only to publish our own Account but otherwise endeavour to refute, or entirely to discredit their's.[55]

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[53] Mist – Edgar, n.d. [1735], R.A., Stuart Papers, 164/80.
[54] Mist – Edgar, 19 December 1733, R.A., Stuart Papers, 166/182.
[55] Mist – Edgar, 23 January 1734, R.A., Stuart Papers, 167/178.

This procedure met with some success, leading to a grateful reply from the Jacobite court, approving of Mist's methods and management.[56]

Nathaniel Mist's exile in France did not remove him from Grub Street, an address not precisely fixed by the cartography of London. While Mist's efforts may not have been part of a concerted campaign to manipulate the newspapers, nor in themselves especially successful in promoting his cause, his initiatives must lead one to question the blanket assumption that the Jacobite court was neither able nor truly willing to exploit newspaper publicity.[57] They also illustrate that there was a certain level of continuity between the two newspapers. *Fog's* could still be considered a 'Jacobite' newspaper: the crisis of 1728 may have forced a change of title, a change in rhetoric; it did not completely recast the newspaper's political attitude. This continuity can especially be seen in the newspaper's attitudes towards parliamentary government and party politics.

Attitudes towards parliament and party

The attitudes of both *Mist's* and *Fog's Weekly Journal* towards the whig administrations that both George I and George II governed through has been generally well served by historians interested in the 'country' opposition to Robert Walpole.[58] Briefly, the common view is that during this period

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[56] Edgar – Mist, 24 February 1734, R.A., Stuart Papers, 168/143.
[57] The Jacobite court's generally neglectful attitude to print culture has been discussed in Chapman, 'Jacobite political argument', pp. 96-133.
[58] Colley, In defiance of oligarchy, pp. 204-35; Dickinson, Bolingbroke, pp. 184-212; A.S. Foord, His Majesty's opposition, 1714-1830 (Oxford, 1964), pp. 15-216; B. Goldgar, Walpole and the wits: the relation of politics to literature, 1722-1742 (London, 1976), pp. 28-66; I. Kramnick, Bolingbroke

where official, state power was monopolised by the whig party (and especially that part of it associated with Sir Robert Walpole following his rise to the premiership in 1722) an opposition arose that, while not entirely excluded from parliament, exploited new avenues of influence over 'the public', including newspapers and the theatre.[59] This new opposition employed a language of 'patriotism', one not entirely dissimilar to the traditional language of English 'country' politics, a language that sought to allow for a grand coalition of oppositional groupings.[60] From radical whigs unhappy with the compromising of the perceived ideals of 1688 that the experience of government had foisted upon the 'court Whigs', through 'patriots' who claimed to have rejected the old party labels, to tories and crypto-Jacobites, all opposition was to be gathered in.[61]

The most obvious fact about this patriot opposition was its failure.[62] When the opposition came closest to success, during the Excise Crisis of 1734, Walpole failed to fall alongside his excise bill and he would enjoy eight

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and his circle: the politics of nostalgia in the age of Walpole (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 17-24; W.T. Laprade, Public opinion and politics in eighteenth century England to the fall of Walpole (New York, 1936), 303-64; Pettit, Illusory consensus, pp. 15-17; Q. Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition: the case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in N. McKendrick (ed.), Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J.H. Plumb (London, 1974). pp. 93-128.

[59] On the status of 'the public' as a political actor, see M. Knights, Representation and misrepresentation in later Stuart Britain: partisanship and political culture (Oxford, 2005), pp. 67-108.

[60] Dickinson, Bolingbroke, pp. 184-211.

[61] Hoppit, A land of liberty?, p. 415.

[62] Not only did it fail to remove Walpole by its own influence, the patriots who briefly tasted power in 1742 singularly failed to effect any patriotic legislation other than a toothless Place Act and succeeded only in disgusting the political nation. See P. Langford, A polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 185-9.

more years as premier, even if his administration never truly regained the political vitality it had once enjoyed.[63] Significantly, even once Walpole did resign high office, his system remained – place and patronage remained the lifeblood of British political life under the Pelhams.[64] This failure has been understood not only as a failure of high politics – George II never lost faith in his prime minister – but as a structural weakness of opposition. United only in its detestation of Walpole, the opposition never cohered into a single force.[65]

This lack of unity has not prevented historians from anointing this movement 'the Opposition', a reification with implications of institutional organisation and unity.[66] How far this can be said to have been the case is highly debatable. A further weakness with much of the historical work on the subject has been to see this Opposition as a party in its own right, led by Viscount Bolingbroke.[67] In this interpretation, the *Craftsman* is the mouthpiece for the Opposition, all other newspapers falling into line. Not only has this encouraged a fixation on the *Craftsman*, it fails to recognise the variations in political argument, the lack of any sort of organisation between the various newspapermen behind the titles, and the ongoing Grub Street skirmishing between papers.[68]

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[63] P. Langford, The excise crisis: society and politics in the age of Walpole (Oxford, 1975), pp. 149-50.
[64] J.B. Owen, The rise of the Pelhams (London, 1957), pp. 318-20.
[65] Dickinson, Bolingbroke, pp. 242-6.
[66] Foord, His Majesty's Opposition, pp. 1-12.
[67] This mistake is persistent throughout Skinner, 'Bolingbroke versus Walpole', pp. 93-128.
[68] S. Varey, 'The Craftsman', in J.A. Downie & T.N. Corns, Telling people what to think: early eighteenth-century periodicals from *The Review* to *The Rambler* (London, 1993), pp. 58-77.

As we have seen in the newspaper's coverage of the parliamentary elections of 1722, the perception that parliamentary corruption was rife, but that this could be reversed by the election of independent, virtuous patriots, was a central part of the newspaper's political identity.[69] However, it is important to note that this attitude of the newspaper was present before the establishment of the *Craftsman* and survived Bolingbroke's own disillusionment with political opposition. Reading the newspapers in sequence, almost as a narrative, the reader cannot fail to be aware of the pervasive attitude towards corruption and place.

While there is not space to mention every article, a few examples can show how the language of corruption spanned the period of the newspapers' publication. In 1718, an article in the *Weekly Journal* made clear the view that the constitution had been corrupted by whig patronage.[70] In 1722, among others, an article argues that that one should take note of the corruption of Rome and that a complete purge of corrupt magistrates is necessary for liberty.[71] In 1726, readers are told how Venetian liberty is preserved by annual elections that stave off corruption.[72] In 1730, a letter on sleep reflects on Britain's need to awake from corruption.[73] 1734, extracts from the *Examiner*, Jonathan Swift's tory periodical, are used to show how the last tory ministry was not guilty of electoral corruption.[74]

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[69] See Chapter 2, above.
[70] Weekly Journal, 25 January 1718.
[71] Weekly Journal, 17 February 1722.
[72] Mist's Weekly Journal, 5 March 1726.
[73] Fog's Weekly Journal, 14 November 1730.
[74] Fog's Weekly Journal, 8 June 1734.

It is clear that Mist's newspapers were part of the general trend of opposition newspapers employing a political discourse of corruption. It is important to note that this was a language spoken in a variety of different accents. While it may be true that the *Craftsman* closely followed traditionally whig arguments, we can see in the *Weekly Journal* a variation that can be used to differentiate it from other purveyors of opposition publications. One aspect that sets apart the use of these diatribes against corruption is that not only has the Commons been corrupted, but that the power of the king has also been emasculated. For *Mist's Weekly Journal*, the reliance on not just one party to govern, but one prime minister, shifted the balance of the British constitution not only away from the people as represented by the House of Commons, but also away from the king:

> The *Tories* have always opposed any Design for changing our Government from a Monarchy into a Commonwealth ... they cannot help being uneasy whenever the Prince delegates his Power to a few Persons about him, because they look upon this to be the same Thing in Effect as a Commonwealth, as it is subjecting both himself and his People to an *Aristocracy*, the worst and most tyrannical of all Commonwealths.[75]

This also illustrates the way that Mist's newspapers did not reject the language of party in order to form a part of a coalesced patriot opposition. The newspapers' attitudes towards party divisions were slightly more ambivalent than that. While there were certainly articles that attacked the party divisions as obsolete,[76] there can be no doubt that the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist articulated a visceral hatred of the whig party, which was seen

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[75] Mist's Weekly Journal, 14 October 1727.
[76] The earliest is Weekly Journal, 26 April 1718.

as a coalition of 'some Spawn of Regicides, and some Hypocrites'.[77] As we shall see, not only were these divisions informed by a rejection of whig political principles, but also by a rejection of whig ecclesiastical principles. The political opposition to Walpole was not only divided by political principle, but also by theological dispute.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate some of the main features of the political identity of the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist, its attitudes towards the central institutions of Britain's civil politics in the first half of the eighteenth century, prince, parliament and party. As it has done so, it has also looked at two central methodological problems for historians when dealing with newspapers as political texts, problems of coherence and continuity. It has stressed the importance of remembering how newspapers worked as a form of literary production, that one can not see them as fixed and unchanging representatives of one argument, but public spaces within which different arguments can be played out.

In the case of the newspapers' identity with regards to the monarchy, while their political principles were undoubtedly Jacobite, these could not be made explicit. Instead, a series of implicit arguments were made. Historians have tended to concentrate on one of these arguments, emphasising a hijacking of whiggish contract theory. This chapter has offered as a corrective to this another attitude, that of a passionate identification with a

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[77] Fog's Weekly Journal, 20 September 1729.

martyred Stuart king and his cult. This variety of civil politics has of course its roots in a theological understanding of politics. The next chapter will examine the almost entirely neglected politics of religion that suffused the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist and were just as essential to its political identity.

Chapter 5

'An Author to whom the Lovers of true Religion and good Literature are equally obliged': the ecclesiastical politics of the *Weekly Journal*[1]

Introduction

In discussions of the politics of Grub Street in the early eighteenth century, surprisingly little attention is paid to the religious identity of the newspapers. It may be sometimes pointed out that individual newspaper writers have a particular religious identity, especially the dissenter Defoe, or maybe Bolingbroke's *libertin* freethinking will be alluded to. However, the newspapers themselves are not given a religious identity in the same way that they are ascribed party political beliefs, or when they are the theme is not developed to any similar extent. This is to underplay the importance of religious belief to political identity in a period that was still riven by sectarian approaches to political life. Such an absence of a theologically informed discussion of newspaper politics also obscures one reason why a newspaper could develop the audience it did. Readership is too readily assumed to be explicable almost exclusively by party political beliefs, ignoring how religious politics could and did cut across the fault lines of civil politics.

The previous chapter demonstrated the central and continuing importance of religion in the newspaper's approach to civil politics. However, the political identity of the newspaper is defined not only by its attitudes towards the crown, parliament and party, but also by its attitudes towards

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[1] Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, 23 January 1720.

the Church of England. In other words, while the previous chapter explored the *Weekly Journal*'s religious interpretation of party politics, this chapter concentrates on the newspaper's political interpretation of religion.

More specifically, this chapter focuses on the Anglican religion.[2] The state of the eighteenth-century church and its attendant historiography is worth some comment.[3] In the same way that the whig interpretation of political history was first attacked in the interwar years and then again with renewed vigour by every subsequent generation of historians, almost to the point where a renunciation of whig historiographical values (whatever that may be taken to mean by the particular historian) has become a part of the red-letter rubric of historical writing, so has the traditional interpretation of eighteenth-century Anglicanism.[4]

While the Victorians recoiled at their image of the Church Somnolent, with the pursuit of comfortable livings the visible sign of a church too worldly, too much an arm of a similarly corrupt state, a corrective was initially offered in the 1920s in the work of Norman Sykes. Sykes's studies would eventually inspire a later generation of revisionist historians to examine the eighteenth-

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[2] It is to be admitted that 'Anglicanism' is an anachronism, but it is such a useful one that for a historian to reject its use for reasons of historical-semantic purity would be utterly self-defeating.

[3] A brief but useful survey can be found in W. Gibson, The Church of England 1688-1832: unity and accord (London, 2001), pp. 4-27.

[4] For the attack on 'whig history', see, among others, H. Butterfield, The whig interpretation of history (London, 1931); J.C.D. Clark, English society 1688-1832: ideology, social structure, and political practice during the ancient regime (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1-41. The whig approach is not without its defenders, although A. Patterson, Nobody's perfect: a new whig interpretation of history (London, 2002) could no doubt be improved upon.

century church on its own terms, attempting to avoid the 'reform perspective' of those who judged harshly in order to justify their own agenda.[5]

However, it is the work of J.C.D. Clark that has done most to radically alter perceptions of the eighteenth-century church, albeit somewhat violently so. While it is not the place of this study to justify Clark's wider claims for the longer period, this chapter – concerned as it is with a conception of orthodoxy that had to be defended from radical heterodoxy not only for the sake of true religion but also for the peace and proper ordering of society – must necessarily be seen in the context of his work.

Mist's newspapers had a political identity, clear to readers in the marketplace, which was informed by a distinct position on religious matters. A strong defence of religious orthodoxy, a virulent hatred of the heterodox, an abiding contempt for protestant dissent, but also a marked sympathy for the schismatic non-jurors were the marks of this identity. In the enforced absence of Convocation, the newspapers cast themselves as public defenders of the rights of the Church of England against 'false brethren' within the church and the seeming hordes of schismatics, deists, and atheists without.[6] In doing so, they could appeal to all who cared for the

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[5] For the 'reform perspective', see A. Burns & J. Innes (eds), Rethinking the age of reform: Britain 1780-1850 (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 4-7.

[6] 'False brethren' refers to the title of Henry Sacheverell's tory sermon of 1710 that resulted in the popular riots and political upheavals that seemed capable of cracking the post-Revolution British state. See G.S. Holmes, The trial of Doctor Sacheverell (London, 1973); G.S. Holmes, 'The Sacheverell riots: the crowd and the Church in early eighteenth-century London', Past and Present 72 (1976), pp. 55-85; C. Jones, 'Debated in the House of Lords on "the Church in danger", 1705, and on Dr Sacheverell's impeachment, 1710', Historical Journal 19 (1976), pp. 759-71.

privileged establishment of the church, not just those who identified with tory or Jacobite conceptions of civil politics.

In order to demonstrate how this religious identity was established in the earliest days of the newspaper's existence, this chapter examines the formative experiences of the religious controversies of the first five years of publication. The reaction of the newspaper to these events made clear its attitudes towards religious politics to readers in the marketplace, an attitude that was sustained throughout the publishing history of the newspaper.

Anglo-theological attitudes: the problems of orthodoxy

It is clear that central to an understanding of the religious politics of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers is an appreciation of the fierce regard in which they held orthodoxy. However, this leaves the task of discovering what precisely the *Weekly Journal* meant by orthodox. This is problematic, not least because much of the party conflict within the Church was fuelled by different conceptions of orthodoxy.[7]

Historians differ too on what it meant to be orthodox in the eighteenth century. Isabel Rivers has discussed a 'new orthodoxy', by which she understands what is popularly called latitudinarianism, and has used this as a standard by which to examine those among the heterodox she considers the most interesting sects: Quakers, old dissent, and Methodism. By her own

[7] That the myriad different conceptions of orthodoxy, both contemporary and scholarly, can lead to problems of categorisation and interpretation can be seen by one attempt to claim Bernard Mandeville for a so-called 'refined orthodoxy', C.W.A. Prior, '"Then leave complaints": Mandeville, anti-catholicism, and English orthodoxy', in C.W.A. Prior (ed.), Mandeville and Augustan ideas: new essays (Victoria, British Columbia, 2000), pp. 51-70.

admission, she ignores trends of thought that do not carry the same interest for her, such as the high church, and the non-jurors.[8] It was these strands of thought though that were the closest competitors to latitudinarianism for the mantle of orthodoxy. Eighteenth-century orthodoxy is thus stripped of much theological content beyond a concern for the Thirty-Nine Articles and Prayer Book, a stress upon the Church's self-image as the *via media* between Rome and Geneva, the package presented as a preservative for the Church's established position and its attendant privileges.

It is important to remember that what follows is a reconstitution of a particular vision of orthodoxy, not an attempt to define, as an absolute standard, in what particular beliefs and practices orthodoxy cohered in the eighteenth century. This vision might have been shared or rejected by various sections of the newspaper's audience.

The newspaper's orthodoxy revolved around a right understanding of theology and practices associated with Christian worship. In many ways, this particular orthodoxy was constructed as a response to trends in heterodox thought: it was defensive, concentrating on those tenets most under attack. For that reason, there was an emphasis on the doctrine of the trinity, a strict compliance with the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and a concern for the purity of the Church against those who would pollute it by seeking a comprehension with the various sects of protestant dissent. This theological position was spelled out most clearly in a series of letters written under the

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[8] I. Rivers, Reason, grace, and sentiment: a study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660-1780. Volume I: Whichcote to Wesley (Cambridge, 1991), p. 2.

pseudonym of 'Eusebius', a correspondent who 'promised by sound Reason, and clear and undeniable Demonstration, to confute the pernicious Errors of these Free-thinking Pamphleteers, and to establish and confirm those Primitive and Apostolical Doctrines they so strenuously labour to decry and subvert'.[9] Appearing weekly in December 1720 and January 1721, these articles defended the 'important Articles of our Faith, the Fundamentals of our common Christianity, the Discipline and Rights of the Church'.[10] The letters clearly identified the defence of orthodoxy with the high church – and by implication the tory party – and the heterodox with the whig party.

Orthodoxy was not just a matter of theological belief, but also of ecclesiastical discipline. While attitudes towards the men who occupied the sees varied wildly – witness the Jacobite hero Francis Atterbury, the despised whig prelate Benjamin Hoadly – the newspapers were constant in affirming the divine ordinance of episcopal discipline over the Church and its members.[11] As in other considerations, this can be seen most clearly in relief. The Revolution of 1688, while confirming the Church of England's primary position (albeit one limited by the Toleration Act), had had entirely different implications for ecclesiastical discipline in Scotland. In the northern kingdom, the post-Restoration policy of Anglicisation was reversed, and the Presbyterian Kirk re-established in place of the episcopalian Church of

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[9] Weekly Journal, 3 December 1720. Among the freethinking pamphleteers may be numbered most obviously The Free-Thinker (London, 1718-21), an anti-clerical periodical which Mist despised.
[10] Weekly Journal, 3 December 1720.
[11] Nathaniel Mist's dislike for certain individual bishops was something of a mutual feeling, J. Black, 'Episcopal condemnation of Nathaniel Mist', Factotum 39 (1995), pp. 12-13.

Scotland. Unlike the English settlement, there was to be no immediate toleration for the vanquished Scottish episcopalians, and the Church remained suborned to a presbyterian establishment, a situation the newspaper found intolerable.[12] One of the earliest news reports about religion was a paragraph on the ejection of some Edinburgh episcopalian ministers from their offices.[13] Later reports informed Mist's readers of further injustices:

> Both Papists and Quakers in [Edinburgh] meet not with the least Interruption or Disturbance in their Worship, for they have their Meetings as Publick as ever; yet those of our Communion, who zealously adhere to the Liturgy of the Church of *England*, dare not so much as assemble in a private House, for the Worship of God ... The regnant Party [i.e. the Presbyterians] are using moreover all Methods to extirpate the very least Remains of the Episcopal Church, and they are willing to tolerate, and connive at any Perswasion but the Church of England.[14]

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[12] A Toleration Act for Scotland was passed in 1712, granting Scottish episcopalians an equivalent status to protestant dissent in England, although the Church remained under grave suspicion of Jacobitism, especially after the rebellion of 1715. For the Scottish episcopal church, see D.M. Bertie, Scottish episcopal clergy, 1689-2000 (Edinburgh, 2000); F. Goldie, A short history of the episcopal church in Scotland: from the restoration to the present time (2nd edn, Edinburgh, 1976); G. White, 'The nine lives of the episcopal cat: changing self-images of the Scottish episcopal church', Records of the Scottish Church History Society 28 (1998), pp. 78-92. For the relationship between Scottish episcopalianism and Jacobitism, see B. Lenman, 'The Scottish episcopal clergy and the ideology of Jacobitism', in E. Cruickshanks (ed.), Ideology and conspiracy: aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759 (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 36-48; R. Strong, 'The reconstruction of episcopalian identity in Scotland: the renunciation of the Stuart allegiance in 1788', Records of the Scottish Church History Society 33 (2003), pp. 143-64; D.H. Whiteford, 'Jacobitism as a factor in presbyterian-episcopalian relationships in Scotland, 1689-90', Records of the Scottish Church History Society 16:2 (1967), pp. 129-49 & 16:3 (1968), pp. 185-201.

[13] Weekly Journal, 19 January 1717. Mist is in fact protesting against the removal of those episcopalian ministers who refused to abjure the Pretender or say prayers for George I, although many ministers conformed to the new regime, Goldie, The episcopal church in Scotland, pp. 43-5; F.C. Mather, 'Church, parliament and penal laws: some Anglo-Scottish interactions in the eighteenth century', English Historical Review 92 (1977), pp. 540-72.

[14] Weekly Journal, 28 September 1717. This attitude was to coalesce with other prejudices when a reader attacked the Scottish, presbyterian journalist

This then was the orthodoxy that the *Weekly Journal* promoted. However, it was rarely laid out in such a positive, schematic manner as it has been reconstructed here. The newspaper's orthodoxy was more often demonstrated in its opposition to heterodoxy. Two early print controversies of religion helped define in the public mind the *Weekly Journal*'s politico-theological stance – the Bangorian Controversy was one; an eruption over anti-trinitarianism (such as happened frequently over the course of the century) another. The positions taken by the newspaper in these disputes marked the newspaper out. They carved for it a certain niche in the market as an oppositional newspaper where the opposition derived from religious belief just as much as from political principle. In this manner, one can appreciate how print opposition to early Hanoverian governments was not simply a matter of following a Bolingbrokean party line, but was rather more varied – and could concern itself with the divine as much as with the worldly. Certainly one correspondent noted these different modes of opposition, telling Mr Mist:

> I perceive that [the *Weekly Journal*] and the London Journal are now in most Request, and have jostled out your Brethren from our

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George Ridpath for supporting the Bishop of Bangor: 'never let it be said that a Church of England Bishop should be oblig'd to accept of the Drudgery of Praise from the Flattery of those who we know hate the very Name of Bishop, and can have no End in praising them but as Butchers deal with Bull Dogs; to set them upon one another', Weekly Journal, 28 December 1717. This combination of xenophobia and sectarianism is a useful illustration of countervailing attitudes to the formation of a British identity partly based on common protestantism as schematised in L. Colley, Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837 (London, 1992), pp. 11-54; a similar point regarding sectarianism and national identity is made in J.C.D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660-1832', Historical Journal 43 (2000), pp. 261-2.

> Morning's Entertainment. Your Paper is renowned for a Religious, his for a Political Zeal. You commendably combat Atheists, he Traytors: And sure there never was an Age in which, wise and brave Antagonists to both, were more needful: Yet as love to the Commonweal has not so entirely devoted him, but he can find Place to intermeddle with Religion, and insert a long Letter even in Defence of Quakerism, so you sometimes give us a Dissertation of Politicks.[15]

This letter reveals something of the finely tuned nature of opposition and its representation in the marketplace of print. The letter concerns the two leading opposition newspapers: one seen as tory, the other country whig. It demonstrates the centrality of religious issues to Mist's newspaper and also to the reading public's perception of his newspaper. It also shows how readers could read different papers for different reasons. While the writer appears to agree with the secular politics of the *London Journal*, or at least finds them unobjectionable, he dislikes the heterodox, anti-clerical air of the newspaper. Similarly, it suggests that one could agree with the religious orthodoxy of the *Weekly Journal* while discounting its stance on the secular government.

Here is to be found one possible explanation for the popularity of a 'Jacobite' newspaper among the reading public. It is not that all its readers were Jacobite, or that they were tory fellow travellers, or even that some of them were whigs reading so as to work up a sense of indignation. Some read the newspaper in appreciation of views it held about other concerns, especially religion, concerns that could be kept separate from one's opinion on the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of the Hanoverian succession. The attacks on the Bishop of Bangor and the anti-trinitarians reveal not only the

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[15] Weekly Journal, 4 February 1721.

theological principles of the newspaper, but a way of extending the newspaper's market appeal.

Against heterodoxy in church and state: opposing the Bishop of Bangor

The Bangorian Controversy remains the most obscure theologico-political dispute in the history of the Church of England, with the possible exception of the Prayer Book Crisis of 1927-28.[16] However, the clash over the nature of the relationship between church and state reveals much of the unsettled nature of the British constitution during the period, the sense that the energies that had fuelled the reshaping of the constitution since the Glorious Revolution had not yet entirely played themselves out. It is also ideal as a study of the press's role in theological debate: the nature of the conflict allowing one to see quite clearly how a newspaper such as the *Weekly Journal* made clear its theological stance in one of the earliest disputes to be mediated through a nascent newspaper medium.

The occasion for the controversy was the expounding of a set of ideas relating to the proper relationship between church and state in a sermon by Benjamin Hoadly, the eponymous Bishop of Bangor. (It is interesting to note that while Hoadly's ideas had already been set forth in a book proclaimedly against the non-jurors, it was the subsequent preaching of a sermon in the ritualised context of the chapel of St James's Palace that started the

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[16] For the Bangorian controversy, see A.E. Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy, 1716-1721', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge (2003); For the prayer book crisis of the early twentieth century, see G.I.T. Machin, 'Parliament, the Church of England and the prayer book crisis, 1927-28' in J.P. Parry & S. Taylor, (eds), Parliament and the Church 1529-1960 (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 131-47.

controversy – a signal example of the remaining cultural importance of the court, even in an age of the public sphere.[17]) The text of the sermon was taken from the Gospel of St John, 'Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world'.[18] Hoadly outlined three main points. Firstly, the true nature of the Christian Church was invisible – there was no absolutely certain visible Church, whether that role had been claimed for the Church of England, the Church of Rome, or a society of the Elect. Secondly, membership of the Church Invisible was marked by the 'sincerity' of one's Christian belief, not by membership of a particular denomination, by the adherence to a particular creed or confession of faith. Thirdly, any attempt to enforce doctrinal purity over sincere belief was to effectively assume an authority that was properly Christ's alone and thus invalid. From these propositions Hoadly reached a startling conclusion:

> the church could not benefit from the legislative protection of the civil power, since the law did not have the power to encourage sincerity. On the contrary, any civil encouragement to profess a particular set of doctrines or to adhere to a particular communion, necessarily discouraged sincerity, since it gave people an incentive to act against their consciences.[19]

In short, a bishop of the Church of England had announced, in front of the Church's Supreme Governor and anointed *Fidei Defensor*, that its

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[17] B. Hoadly, A preservative against the principles and practices of the nonjurors both in church and state; or, an appeal to the consciences and common sense of the laity (London, 1716). Court, parliamentary, and other 'institutional' sermons were set pieces in the controversy: 'On Sunday last Dr. Snape preached before the King at the Chapel Royal at St. James's; his Text was in the 6th Chapter of the Romans and the 21st Verse, 'What Fruits had ye in those Things whereof ye are now ashamed; for the End of these Things are Death': He inveighed heartily against the Bishop of Bangor's Sermon', Weekly Journal, 20 July 1717.

[18] John 18:36.

[19] Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy, 1716-1721', p. 4.

attempts to maintain theological discipline over the nation through legislation such as the Test and Corporation Acts (the strict maintenance of which had long been a shibboleth of the high church and the tory party) was unchristian.[20] Furthermore, Hoadly's arguments made the Church of England as an institution a human creation subordinate to the state, rejecting the idea that its divine institution led to its being equal and independent of the state, and that as such the state had the right to model the church as it pleased.[21] Hoadly's vision of the Church of England was that of 'a doctrinally minimal, Erastian "national religion"'.[22]

The *Weekly Journal* took a full part in the controversy, which, coming as it did so early in the newspaper's run, defined its position on the religious issues of the day. An examination of how the *Weekly Journal* viewed the controversy and then disseminated those opinions, casts much light not only on how the newspaper, still a relatively unfamiliar presence in the London

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[20] For the struggle over the Test and Corporation Acts, see M. Knights, 'Occasional conformity and the representation of dissent: hypocrisy, sincerity, moderation and zeal', Parliamentary History 24 (2005), pp. 41-57; K.R.M. Short, 'The English indemnity acts, 1726-1867', Church History 42 (1973), pp. 366-76; A.C. Thompson, 'Contesting the Test Act: dissent, parliament and the public in the 1730s', Parliamentary History 24 (2005), pp. 58-70; G. Townend, 'Religious radicalism and conservatism in the whig party under George I: the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts', Parliamentary History 7 (1988), pp. 24-44.

[21] The controversy can be understood as one of a series of disputes caused by the tension between the Church of England's dual status as being both 'catholic and apostolic' and 'by law established', J.G.A. Pocock, 'Within the margins: the definitions of orthodoxy', in R.D. Lund (ed.), The margins of orthodoxy: heterodox writing and cultural reponse, 1660-1750 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 41-2.

[22] Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy', p. 188. For Erastian strains of thought, see J. Marshall, 'The ecclesiology of the latitude-men 1660-1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and "Hobbism"', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 36 (1985), pp. 407-27.

newspaper world and not necessarily one that its readership would imagine lasting for another two decades, formed a distinctive character for itself. It also helps to explain the manner in which the newspapers could appeal to the wider public beyond the limited audience of committed Jacobites to high church but essentially pro-Hanoverian tories and even some 'church whigs'.[23]

A recent study of the controversy has uncontroversially, but entirely correctly, pointed out that 'newspapers were a fairly recent and a very powerful means of communication and the Bangorian controversy was one of the first examples of newspapers exerting influence on a public dispute'.[24] Mist's newspaper played a threefold role in the controversy: it reported the events as news; it provided a space for commentary on events, from both unnamed employed writers and from the wider readership; and advertising the books and pamphlets wherein the controversy was played out. The newspaper was then both reporter and participant – it not only took a direct role in the arguments, it also, through its advertisements, acted as a link, extending knowledge of the controversy and its sites to any interested reader and thus widening its impact.[25]

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[23] It has been argued that 'the whig / low church and tory / high church alliances were certainly fairly widespread [in the eighteenth century], but they were not the only possible combination ... there could be a surprising overlap in the aims (and even methods) of low and high Churchmen', J. Gregory & J.S. Chamberlain, 'National and local perspectives of the Church of England in the long eighteenth century', in Gregory & Chamberlain (eds), The national Church in local perspective: the Church of England and the regions, 1660-1800 (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 24-5.

[24] Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy', pp. 54-5.

[25] Starkie notes the involvement of the Weekly Journal, which he refers to as a 'stalwart' of the tory press, but does not really develop his point that the newspapers exerted an influence over the debate, 'The Bangorian controversy', p. 47.

News reporting that merely stated the order of events – in what might be called the objective style – was a rarity. One must also bear in mind that even those few examples of the objective style would not necessarily strike the reader as neutral, carrying as they did unwritten implications. For instance, one of the earliest mentions of the controversy in the news columns of the paper was the following small paragraph:

> On Monday the House of Commons debated a Motion of Sir William Windham's, two hours, for Dr. Snape ... (who lately published an Answer to Dr. Hoadly Bishop of Bangor's Sermon) to preach before the House the 29th of May, being the Anniversary of the Restoration of King Charles the Second; and at last divided, Whether he should Preach or not, which was carried in the Affirmative by the Majority of 10 Votes; and it was ordered that Sir William Windham and Mr. Shippen acquaint him therewith, and that he prepare his Sermon accordingly.[26]

Assuming a readership not unsympathetic to a Jacobite or Carolinist understanding of politics, this apparently neutral report transmits two pieces of information which carry specific connotations: the anniversary of the Stuart restoration and the leading role played in opposing the Bishop of Bangor by two Jacobite MPs.[27] At other times, the reporting style of the *Weekly Journal* employed such rhetorical tricks as allusion and sarcasm to let readers know what the newspaper made of the events it was reporting. One example would be the report of other sermons that took place that same Restoration Day, when 'Some of the Reverend Clergy, on the Anniversary of the Restoration, took Occasion to touch very smartly upon a certain Prelate, who *has laid the*

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[26] Weekly Journal, 18 May 1717.

[27] For the importance of the Stuart anniversaries, see Chapter 4, above. For the Jacobite MPs, see D.W, Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, & S. Handley (eds), The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1690-1715 (5 vols, Cambridge, 2002), V, pp. 469-71, 941-3.

Axe to the Root of the Tree'.[28] Some reports seem to have been little more than jokes:

> We hear some of the Bangorists are very much provoked at a Book lately published, entituled, *A philosophical Enquiry into the Bishop of* Bangor*'s Tenets, &c.* and that at a publick Meeting, the Champions of that Sect had a Consultation lately about writing an Answer to it; but upon a long Debate, and finding it a little above their Capacity, they adjourned the Question to another Occasion.[29]

The controversy could also bleed into the reporting of other events. Sometimes the subjects were congruent, such as when report reached the paper of the ill health of the then Bishop of Durham, Nathaniel Crew, 'and the Whigs say, the Bishop of Bangor will succeed him; but as my Lord of Durham has often deceived such Expectants, perhaps he may do it again, tho' 'tis true his Lordship is very Old'.[30] The debate also coloured the coverage of events entirely unrelated to matters ecclesiastical, such as when one correspondent was glad to hear that, following concern over new half pence coins, 'some judicious Persons are making Application to the Honourable House of Commons to decide that Affair, lest the publick News-papers should be pester'd with Letters Pro and Con, and the Paper-War be carry'd as high as it was between A—w S—e and the B—p of B—r'.[31]

The Bangorian controversy was indeed an extensive paper-war – 'the Town is yet full of Pamphlets on the Bangorian Controversy, and more coming out every Day, and when this Paper-War will be at an end we cannot

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[28] Weekly Journal, 1 July 1717.
[29] Weekly Journal, 12 October 1717.
[30] Weekly Journal, 20 July 1717. Crew did not die until 1721; William Talbot, not Hoadly, was appointed Bishop of Durham in his place in 1722.
[31] Weekly Journal, 8 February 1718.

foretell'.[32] The *Weekly Journal* was not afraid to employ this figure of speech as far as it could possibly go – and then beyond, the metaphor not so much stretched or mixed as surprised and then violently beaten:

> They begin now to attack with Pen and Ink, in as much Form, and with almost as much Fury as you would beseige a Castle; the Bishop is the Bulwark, and so cunning an Ingineer that all the united Force of the confederate Christian Pens, 'tis feared, won't be able to prevail against him: He has fortify'd himself with an exceeding Hornwork, a double Curtain, and a prodigious Number of Bastions; the Besiegers first drew up all round him, endeavouring to Force where the Walls were weakest, in which Defence the Prelate shewed his great Power more than Skill, in defeating and dispersing the compleatest Body of Spiritual Troops in Christendom, to the Surprize of all the World ... Among these valiant Soldiers who exert themselves in the Cause of the Church, are the Reverend Mr. Innis, who at St. Margaret's Westminster last Sunday boldly shewed himself a Member of Christ's Kingdom in this World, and gave Defiance to its Enemies. The Reverend Mr. Trapp Cannonaded them for near two Hours at St. Olive Jury: Dr. Sacheveral, at St. Andrew's, insisted on the Primitive Doctrine, poured forth Volleys of Antischismatical Shot, and smote them under the fifth Rib: And the Reverend Mr. Hilliard, at Lothbury, like another David, broke the Neck of their Goliath; with the vast Weight of his Arguments crushed the Viper, 'tis hoped in the Embryo; his Words were as sharp as a two edged Sword, and every Sentence did the Execution of a red hot Bullet.[33]

Truly a defence of the Church Militant. This was to be the newspaper's method in reporting the controversy: a summary of arguments, often taken verbatim from the original pamphlets, 'with just Observation in this Journal, that we may give our Readers a full Account of that Controversy'.[34] How just that observation was depended on one's position in the affair. It is not to be assumed that all readers would share the views of the newspaper: certainly

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[32] Weekly Journal, 8 June 1717.
[33] Weekly Journal, 8 June 1717. A comprehensive account of the pamphlets and arguments contained therein can be found in Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy', especially pp. 72-114.
[34] Weekly Journal, 6 July 1717.

at least one correspondent made the effort to complain of the paper's stance, signing himself 'George and Bangor Forever'.[35] That correspondent saw Mist's opposition to Bangor as stemming from his civil Jacobitism and, on one level, this can be seen as a party conflict, a religious dispute neatly mirroring the coinciding impeachment of Queen Anne's tory minister, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford.[36] (One poetaster contributed some verse on how '*Our Whig and our Tory disputed in Anger / Concerning the tenets of the B—p of B—n—r*'.[37]) However, the Bangorian Controversy indicates how ecclesiastical politics could cut across the civil boundaries of tory and whig.

Hoadly's view of the church had angered not only the tory and high church elements, but also moderate church whigs such as Edmund Gibson and William Wake – those who practiced whiggery in the state, but rejected its anti-clerical implications.[38] In many ways, the Bangorian controversy was a sign of the fault lines with the whig party that had at one point looked as if

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[35] Weekly Journal, 31 May 1718.

[36] Although, even so, one should bear in mind that the secular politics did not overshadow the religious. As the newspaper reported, 'even the Tryal of the Earl of Oxford, and the famous Debates between the two Houses, the like of which have not happened, or at least been carried to such a height these many Years, we might say Ages; yet, we say, even these Debates have not been able to divert our Thoughts from the more remarkable Affair of the Quarrel between the Churchmen', Weekly Journal, 6 June 1718. During the weeks that followed, coverage of the religious dispute took precedence over the articles on the impeachment. See also B.W. Hill, Robert Harley: speaker, secretary of state and premier minister (London, 1988), pp. 227-30; C. Jones, 'The impeachment of the earl of Oxford and the whig schism of 1717: four new lists', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 55 (1982), pp. 66-87.

[37] Weekly Journal, 4 January 1718.

[38] For Gibson, a 'high church adviser to a ministry that drew much of its support from anti-clericals and dissenters', see S. Taylor, '"Dr. Codex" and the whig "pope": Edmund Gibson, bishop of Lincoln and London, 1716-1748', in R.W. Davis (ed.), Lords of Parliament: studies, 1714-1914 (Stanford, 1995), p. 27.

they would cause the fall of the nascent whig supremacy. Many whigs were concerned that the Bangorian sermon was the presentation and publicisation of the Sunderland ministry's ecclesiastical policy, one based around an antilcerical compound of comprehension and Erastianism, and one that was seen by them as unacceptable as toryism in the state.[39] This fratricidal aspect of the controversy was recognised in the newspaper's reporting of events:

> Blessed be thou, *O! High Church*, that thou hast nothing to do in this Quarrel, but that as the Temper suits exactly with the Constitution of Christian Whiggism, so the Strife is wholly their own; and that it falls not only among the Whigs, but among some of the maddest and hottest of that Side; let us sit still and see them fight it out, and let them afterwards mend their scratch'd Faces as they can.[40]

The attitude struck by the newspaper was not one that only tories could approve of. Mist's defence of orthodoxy in this respect at least was one consistent with ecclesiastical positions held by people who would otherwise identify themselves politically with his newspapers' principal opponents, the whigs. If it is indeed true that the Bangorian controversy 'saw a rejection by mainstream church whiggery of an Erastian doctrine of the church, and the adoption by orthodox whig churchmen ... of a virtually high church ecclesiology', then the *Weekly Journal*'s coverage shows how the defence of orthodoxy could appeal beyond a narrowly conceived tory audience to these political and ecclesiastical hybrids.[41]

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[39] Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy', p. 5. W.A. Speck, 'The whig schism under George I', Huntington Library Quarterly 40 (1977), pp. 171-9; Townend, 'Religious radicalism and conservatism', pp. 26-40.
[40] Weekly Journal, 13 July 1717.
[41] Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy', p. 36.

Against heterodoxy in Grub Street: opposing the Independent Whig

During the controversy that his views engendered, Hoadly found himself in the rather uncomfortable position of being defended by those whose views he rejected: the British deists.[42] While Hoadly may have had original views on the proper nature of church and state, he himself professed an entirely unexceptional belief in the truth of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, that Christ was fully divine as well as fully human and – with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit – one of the three persons of the one God. The support of men such as John Toland was hardly to be welcomed, linking as it did the two main threats to orthodoxy, as the *Weekly Journal* saw matters. Unlike the Bangorian controversy, however, which had appeared with little warning, the struggle between the orthodox and those who would deny such dogmas as the divinity of Christ, the nature of revelation, or even the existence of a creator involving Himself with His own creation, had long been a cause of controversy, especially since the passing of the Toleration

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[42] Starkie, 'The Bangorian controversy', p. 18. The British deists included men such as John Toland, Samuel Clarke, William Whiston, . See J.A.I. Champion, The Pillars of Priestcraft shaken: the Church of England and its enemies, 1660-1730 (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 133-69; R.L. Emerson, 'Heresy, the social order, and English deism', Church History 37 (1968), pp. 389-403; J.I. Israel, Radical enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity (Oxford, 2001), pp. 599-627; R.B. Luehrs, 'The problematical compromise: the early deism of Anthony Collins', Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 6 (1977), pp. 59-77; R. Paulson, 'Henry Fielding and the problem of deism', in Lund (ed.), Margins of orthodoxy, pp. 240-70; R.H. Popkin, 'The deist challenge', in O.P. Grell, J.I. Israel, & N. Tyacke (eds), From persecution to toleration: the Glorious Revolution and religion in England (Oxford, 1991), pp. 331-68; J. Redwood, Reason, ridicule and religion: the age of enlightenment in England, 1660-1750 (London, 1976).

Act.[43] The orthodox were, throughout the eighteenth century, always on their guard against the menace of such heterodoxy.[44]

The objections of the newspaper to deism were clear. In an acknowledgement to a letter received that was not published because its contents were so unacceptable, Mr Mist upbraided his correspondent 'who is guilty of such a manifest Contradiction, as to stile himself Christian Deist, when it is obvious to the meanest Capacity, that he does not understand the Terms, that the Christian Religion is founded on Revelation; whereas Deism consists in setting up Reason and the Light of Nature in Opposition to all Revelation: So that the Mysteries of our Holy Religion, not comprehensible by their finite Understandings, are by no Means admitted for Articles of their Creed'.[45] By setting up the mysteries of faith against the touchstone of reason, and finding them wanting, the deists rejected Christianity: there could be no accommodation. Indeed, any efforts to reach a theology that was no longer a refutation of deism and a restatement of orthodox principles, but an attempt to engage with it, was itself just as dangerous. One correspondent wrote in anger against such foolhardiness:

> I know not a more fashionable Doctrine than that of *Moderation. Atheists, Deists, Arians,* FALSE BRETHREN, *Hereticks* and

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[43] Redwood, Reason, ridicule and religion surveys the restoration roots of heterodoxy; Israel, Radical enlightenment, pp. 599-609, puts the British deists into European context (which, for Israel, means placing them in a Spinozist 'radical Enlightenment'). For the impact of the Toleration Act, see Champion, Pillars of priestcraft shaken, p. 99-100.

[44] Clark, English society, pp. 277-348 charts the various conflicts 1688-1800. See also R.T. Holtby, Daniel Waterland, 1683-1740: a study in eighteenth-century orthodoxy (Carlisle, 1966). J.I. Israel, Enlightenment contested: philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man, 1670-1752 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 353-6, recounts the 'recoil from radicalism'.

[45] Weekly Journal, 26 March 1720.

> *Schismaticks* of all Denominations, press it upon us with Heat, Virulence and Passion ... I never enter into an Argument with a *moderate Gentleman*, on his darling Topick, without securing his Cane, lest I should be knock'd down for my Opposition, in the true Spirit of *Moderation*; of that *Moderation*! which has been the fruitful Mother of Heresies, Riots, and Rebellions.[46]

Moderation in theology had blighted both church and nation through the encouragement of heresy – civil disturbances were intimately linked with the development of heterodoxy. The link between disorder in church and disorder in state was not to be doubted.[47] Here was an interesting parallel: the *Weekly Journal* had already, by this point, come under the displeasure of the ministry and was tainted with accusations of treason, accusations the newspaper rather disingenuously denied.[48] However, it understood a double standard to be at play. Attacking the rival newspaper *Read's Weekly Journal* for its theological laxity, Mist's paper fulminated against the perceived injustice:

> Is Treason against a Temporal Prince [to be] punish'd with immediate Torments and Death, and Treason against the unutterable Glory only punished with a Month's Imprisonment, and then the Criminal at Liberty to repeat the Crime! ... How many Criminals have we on Record at the *Old Baily*, who have justly received much greater Punishment than this for speaking indecently of the Person and Government of King George![49]

If church and state were separate but equal, as the anti-Erastian rhetoric of the paper's position on the Bangorian Controversy would imply, and heterodoxy in church was equivalent to treason in state, why was there

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[46] Weekly Journal, 3 June 1721. The denunciation of 'false brethren' is of course again referencing the Sacheverell furore of the reign of Queen Anne.
[47] Such a link between heterodoxy in religion and radicalism in politics would be made again in the twentieth century, Clark, English society, pp. 277-348.
[48] Weekly Journal, 3 August 1717.
[49] Weekly Journal, 15 March 1718.

no punitive equivalence between the two crimes? The Blasphemy Act of 1698 had, after all, by criminalizing unitarianism, confirmed that the policing of these strands of theological thinking was a matter cognizable by the civil courts.[50] It was a theme that the newspaper returned to, such as when one correspondent, styling himself 'CLE—ERKIN', contributed his thoughts 'on the dangerous Influence Atheism and Deism have upon all Commonwealths':

> A Rebel we hang, because he singly disturbs the Peace of the State; a Robber, because he disobeys its Laws; a Traytor, because he is an Enemy to our Prince's Person; but an Atheist and a Deist, is, or may, upon his own Principles, be all this; he unhinges, as much as lies in his Power, the very Foundation of Society; the Rebel, &c. may reform, and become Sensible of his Offence against God and his King, and upon Principle make a future Restitution; but these Men have no Room for Amendment; their Villainy is founded upon Principle, and therefore, while they remain Atheists or Deists, they can be neither good Subjects, kind Neighbours, obedient Children, affectionate Husbands, nor just Dealers.[51]

Worse, then, than treachery. This form of heterodoxy was far more closely linked in the newspaper's reasoning with the party quarrel between whig and tory, with the whigs naturally the villains. Individual deists were linked to the whig party. (Viscount Bolingbroke's personal deism was not a matter of public knowledge at this point and so did not complicate matters.[52]) This was particularly true of John Toland, author of such deistical works as *Nazarenus*.[53] When asked why whig authors seemed so quiet on the uproar

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[50] J. Hoppit, A land of liberty? England 1689-1727 (Oxford, 2000), p. 230. The act was to prove ineffective, Clark, English society, pp. 286-7.
[51] Weekly Journal, 12 March 1720.
[52] Nor would it be until posthumous publication of his Works (5 vols, London, 1754), W. Merrill, From statesman to philosopher: a study in Bolingbroke's deism (New York, 1949), pp. 12-13.
[53] For John Toland, see J.A.I. Champion, Republican learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1696-1722 (Manchester, 2003); Israel,

around Toland's works, Mr Mist 'gives this Answer in few Words, viz. *Mr. Toland is a WHIG*'.[54] The newspapers printed many personal attacks on Toland, though not often enough for some. One correspondent noted that while Mr Mist had 'expressed your Abhorrence of the Atheistical Toland, yet I think you cannot too often present your Reader with an Antidote against the Poison of this Viper'.[55] Another reader felt Mr Mist's sinews were in need of a touch of stiffening:

> Rouse up your wonted Bravery, and boldly act the Man; vindicate the injured Honour of your Maker, by refuting the blasphemous Tenets of Mr. Toland, Author of *Nazarenus* ... At a Time therefore when so many infamous Libels are gone out amongst our most excellent Constitution in Church and State, 'tis much to be wish'd the Legislative Power would exert their Authority in putting a Stop to such Proceedings, which, if not timely suppressed, may truly endanger both ... our most holy established Religion is the best modelled of any in the whole Universe, and as such will admit of no Invaders; therefore brand such impious Authors, who would impose Antiscriptural, Antichristian, &c. Doctrines upon us, with indelible Marks of Infamy.[56]

This heresy was not only personalised: it was publicised. The *Weekly Journal*'s crusade against heresy was equally a spat between newspapers. The success of the *Independent Whig*, an essay sheet stressing the anti-clerical aspects of whig thought, had become a particular concern of the

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Radical Enlightenment, pp. 609-14; R.E. Sullivan, John Toland and the deist controversy (Cambridge, Mass., 1982). Other notable heterodox thinkers who were attacked by the newspaper were Samuel Clarke and William Whiston, for example: 'Cl—k and W—ton had not they had their Patrons and Encouragers a grand Excommunication, at least, had been laid upon them long since', Weekly Journal, 6 July 1719. For Clarke, see T.C. Pfizenmaier, The trinitarian theology of Dr Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): context, sources, and contoversy (Leiden, 1997). For Whiston, see J.E. Force, William Whiston: honest Newtonian (Cambridge, 1985).

[54] Weekly Journal, 30 August 1718.

[55] Weekly Journal, 20 September 1718.

[56] Weekly Journal, 16 August 1718.

newspaper.[57] Mr Mist looked upon the *Independent Whig* and despaired that 'the fatal Poison has been greedily swallowed by the unthinking Multitude; that the Principles therein asserted are become popular, and cried up as the *Oracle of Reason*, and that Scepticism and an universal Latitude in Matters of Faith, and Dissoluteness and Libertinism in Practice, are like to be the Consequence of that general Applause with which this paper is received'.[58] One can see this in terms of the marketplace of print as well as the struggle for hearts and minds. This competition was made explicitly clear in the preface to Mist's *Collection of miscellany letters.*[59]

One interesting facet of this Grub Street quarrel was the way it highlighted the *Weekly Journal*'s ambivalence towards 'popery'. Anti-popery is a familiar sentiment to the student of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century culture.[60] A populist, demagogic rhetoric, opposed not only to the dogmas of the Catholic faith, but also the absolutist political structures that tended to go

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[57] T. Gordon & J. Trenchard, The Independent Whig: or, a defence of primitive Christianity and of our ecclesiastical establishment against the encroachments of fanatical and disaffected clergymen (London, 1722); T. Gordon, The character of an independent whig (London, 1719) was a precursor of the arguments of the periodical. The Independent Whig was reprinted 1722, 1724 (in Pennsylvania), 1726, 1728, 1732, 1735, 1736, and 1743.

[58] Weekly Journal, 3 December 1720.

[59] Mist, N., A collection of miscellany letters, selected out of Mist's Weekly Journal (4 vols, London, 1722-27), I, 'The Preface', pp. ii-iii.

[60] C. Haydon, 'Parliament and popery in England, 1700-1780', in Parry & Taylor (eds), Parliament and the Church, pp. 49-63; A. Sneddon, '"These crafty adversaries": Bishop Frances Hutchinson and anti-Catholic rhetoric in early Hanoverian England, c. 1714-21', Recusant History 27 (2005), pp. 521-36; R.D. Tumbleson, Catholicism in the protestant imagination: nationalism, religion, and literature, 1660-1745 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 161-201. A.C. Thompson 'Popery, politics, and private judgement in early Hanoverian Britain', Historical Journal 45 (2002), pp. 333-56, illustrates the representation of (anti-)popery in two dissenter periodicals, the Occasional Paper (1716-18) and the Old Whig (1735-38).

with them in early modern Europe, the wooden shoes as much as the Real Presence. This sense of anti-popery, the way it could smooth out doctrinal differences between the different protestant denominations of England and Scotland, has been seen as one of the defining aspects of British national identity.[61]

No one can deny the populism of Mist's newspapers. They did not, however, go in for Catholic-baiting. Indeed, they attacked the *Independent Whig* for their attacks on popery. These were seen as a specious cover for attacks on revealed religion in general – 'under the Pretence of exposing the Errors of Popery, [the *Independent Whig*] laboured to bring all revealed Religion into Contempt'.[62] As another correspondent wrote, 'Jacobitism and Popery may be dangerous Enemies to the Protestant Religion ... but since Heresie and Error are as dangerous to Religion as these, [they] ought at least to give us an equal Concern'.[63] Here then is one example of how internal divisions within British protestantism could trump fears of the Catholic 'Other'.[64]

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[61] Colley, Britons, pp. 18-30; C. Haydon, '"I love my king and my country, but a Roman Catholic I hate": anti-Catholicism, xenophobia and national identity in eighteenth-century England', in T. Claydon & I.R. McBride (eds), Protestantism and national identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650-c.1850 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 33-52.

[62] Weekly Journal, 3 December 1720.

[63] Weekly Journal, 30 August 1718.

[64] Clark, 'Protestantism', pp. 261-3, 272-4. One should not see anti-Catholicism as a fixed and universal attitude of eighteenth-century Britons: S. Conway, 'War, imperial expansion and religious developments in mid-eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland', War in History 11 (2004), pp. 125-47, charts how elite and popular attitudes to Catholicism could differ through the experience of war.

On schismatics: the contrast between non-jurors and dissent

In the Christian tradition, schism had been understood as one of the worst of sins, rudely tearing asunder the Church, the Body of Christ. The newspapers of Nathaniel Mist did not stray far from this view. They regularly rounded on the 'Schismaticks' who, driven by hypocrisy, disrupted the unity of church and state. At their worst, they either threatened the ruin of the Church of England, through comprehension, or would entrench a permanent schism in the state through repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, or an abuse of the Toleration Act. However, it is also clear that by schismatics were meant only the presbyterians, baptists and other heirs of the puritan dissent of the seventeenth century. Those who had, during Mist's lifetime, actually entered into schism – the non-jurors – were treated with a far greater sympathy.

Dissenters, as far as the newspaper was concerned, were all hypocrites.[65] This perception lent itself to the newspaper's rhetoric in two ways. When revealed in the news columns of the newspaper this hypocrisy could then be angrily denounced in tones of moral disgust at the failings of those who would set themselves up to be a better Christian (such as when 'one Robert Gee, an eminent Teacher and Proselyter among our Fanatick

[65] The tory party was in many ways united by distrust of dissent, H.T. Dickinson, Liberty and property: political ideology in eighteenth-century Britain (London, 1977), pp. 53-6. For the role of 'hypocrisy' in religious politics, see Knights, 'Occasional conformity', pp. 47-51. This distrust is one nexus point of the tory / High Church identity, J.S. Chamberlain, Accommodating high churchmen: the clergy of Sussex, 1700-1745 (Urbana, IL, 1997), pp. 17-28.

Party' was convicted of sodomy).[66] More often though it was a source of humour, the newspaper leavening the almost weekly denunciations of dissent with sarcasm and irony:

> Mr. Eng—d, a Dispencer of God's Word, together with the Elders of the Meeting House at Sherbon, do hereby give Notice, That not having immediate Occasion, it will be Lett or Sold. It is a large Room, and very convenient to hold a Quantity of Hay, Hemp, or Spinning Mohair for Button-makers. If they can agree for the Galleries, it is extremely commodious for a Musick-Room for publick Entertainment at Pack-Monday-Fair: There are in it Divers Recesses, very curiously fitted up for any Diversion that requires Secrecy. The Pulpit, being little the worse for wearing, may be disposed of a-part. It will make, with little Alteration, a very curious Beaufet; there are already in it very pretty Conveniences, which he formerly used for his Bottles, Pipes, Tinderbox, Cards, and Cribbage-Board; these may easily be converted to more elegant Uses, and will be sold a Pennyworth.[67]

That is not to say that this humour was a pleasant one: the death was reported of 'A modern Saint, lately a Pronouncer of *Amens* in a Meeting-House in Nightingale Lane, having lost all his Money at All-Fours, among some of his own Brethren; to alleviate which Misfortune, he drank such a Quantity of Brandy, that he died upon the Spot'.[68] Much of the newspaper's distrust of the dissenters stemmed from fears for the purity of the Church in the wake of the institutionalised schism in British society that was the unintended consequence of the Toleration Act.[69]

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[66] Weekly Journal, 12 September 1719. For attitudes to homosexuality, see N.M. Goldsmith, The worst of crimes: homosexuality and the law in 18th century London (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 5-48; R. Norton, Mother Clap's molly house: the gay subculture in England, 1700-1830 (London, 1992), pp. 32-69; D. Rubini, 'Sexuality and Augustan England: sodomy, politics, elite circles and society', Journal of Homosexuality 16 (1988), pp. 349-81.
[67] Weekly Journal, 18 May 1717.
[68] Weekly Journal, 14 September 1717.
[69] Hoppit, Land of liberty?, pp. 32-33, 218.

It is tempting to think that ideas of intolerance that defined the relationship between church and state in the latter part of the Restoration period were swept away with the Glorious Revolution.[70] Just as secular theories and rhetorics of passive obedience and the divine right of kings survived into the early eighteenth century, so did their ecclesiastical equivalents.[71] Under this scheme of things, the Toleration Act was thus best understood as a temporary expedient, generously bestowed upon the dissenters for the sake of civil peace – in short, an indulgence.[72] 'Let the truly scrupulous Consciences (if any such there are) enjoy the Benefit of their Toleration, and bless the Hand that indulg'd them with it', as one correspondent had it.[73] The Toleration Act was in this manner cast as the parliamentary equivalent of the sort of regal dispensations and suspensions of earlier reigns and little more.

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[70] For intolerance, see M. Goldie, 'The theory of religious intolerance in restoration England', in Grell, Israel, & Tyacke (eds), From persecution to toleration, pp. 331-68; A. Walsham, Charitable hatred: tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500-1700 (Manchester, 2006), pp. 39-105. The Spectator, 3 March 1711, was among the first to hail the Glorious Revolution as the triumph of tolerance – an enduring interpretation – in an essay by Joseph Addison, but see also H. Trevor-Roper, 'Toleration and religion after 1688', in Grell, Israel, & Tyacke (eds), From persecution to toleration, pp. 389-408.

[71] As can be seen in part by the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts of the 'tory reaction' of 1710-14. See J. Flaningham, 'The occasional conformity controversy: ideology and party politics, 1697-1711', Journal of British Studies 17 (1977), pp. 38-62; Hoppit, Land of Liberty?, pp. 231-6; Townend, 'Religious radicalism and conservatism', p. 27.

[72] The long title of the Toleration Act is 'An act for exempting their majesties' protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws', English historical documents: VI 1660-1714 (London, 1966), p. 400.

[73] Weekly Journal, 8 March 1718.

The dissenters had no right to expect any more, the paper felt. One of the fears of the newspaper was the further loosening of the restraints placed upon dissent. While the toleration was grudgingly allowed – though the newspaper would often assert that the terms of toleration were far more generous than those offered to Anglicans during the interregnum, another sign of dissenting hypocrisy – there should be no accommodation of dissent within a more general comprehension.[74] One 'Fanatick Hater' was typical of the mood, when he wrote to Mr Mist of his participation in 'a long Dispute with some pretended Churchmen, about that monstrous Scheme of Ecclesiastical Politicks, a Comprehension, (by which some good-natured People propose to give Schismaticks a Toleration, contrary to Law, who in Forty One denied the Church a Toleration, according to Law, and to let in a Gang of Thieves, for Fear of being tired with their Rapping at the Doors)'.[75] Another letter-writer, 'being a Member of the Church of England', could not 'bear to hear the Dissenters (those destructive Enemies of her pure Communion) declaring publickly, with an insulting Air, in every Coffee-House, the repeated Assurances they pretend to receive of what they term a Comprehension'.[76] Similarly, the newspaper feared a repeal of the Test and

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[74] The Toleration Act was originally meant to only apply to a small number of protestant dissenters, the majority entering into communion with the Church of England following a comprehension that eased theological differences. See J. Spurr, 'The Church of England, comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689', English Historical Review 104 (1989), pp. 927-46; G.J. Schochet, 'The Act of Toleration and the failure of comprehension: persecution, nonconformity, and religious indifference', in D. Hoak & M. Feingold (eds), The world of William and Mary: Anglo-Dutch perspectives on the revolution of 1688-89 (Stanford, 1996), pp. 165-87.

[75] Weekly Journal, 29 November 1718.

[76] Weekly Journal, 8 March 1718.

Corporation Acts, a repeal that would admit them into the state as a comprehension would admit them into the Church. Reports of preparations for such a repeal were common:

> There was a great Meeting last Week at the Rose-Tavern without Temple-Bar, where we hear the New Bill intended to be brought in for the taking off the unqualifying Laws from the Dissenters, was concerted, and, as it is said, was unanimously agreed on; which makes the Presbyterians expect — great Matters.[77]

However, the newspaper's disdain for the dissenters was not matched when it came to consider those other schismatics, the non-jurors. The Church had been riven by schism following the Revolution of 1688, as those churchmen who felt themselves bound by oaths of allegiance to the deposed James II could not recognise the right of William of Orange as King of England *de jure*. Ejected from their offices and livings, the non-jurors presented themselves as living reproof of the contortions that many other churchmen went through in order to reconcile their beliefs about the nature of divine kingship to the new dispensation.[78]

While the newspapers never sought to justify the non-juring schism – that would have gone too far for a newspaper already associated with Jacobitism – they were willing to defend the non-juring church against those who would persecute them, whether they were public or private persons. (No doubt this is one visible sign of Nathaniel Mist's own Jacobitism.) One early report of a man acquitted at the Quarter Sessions of assaulting some non-

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[77] Weekly Journal, 18 March 1717.
[78] C.D.A. Leighton, 'The non-jurors and their history', Journal of Religious History 29 (2005), pp. 241-57. Non-jurors were seen to be by definition Jacobite, D. Szechi, The Jacobites: Britain and Europe 1688-1788 (Manchester, 1994), pp. 19-22.

jurors ascribed his being found not guilty to the fact that he was 'a Person well affected to the Government'.[79] A play called *The Non-Juror* was attacked for its mockery, 'wherein the Author ridicules the whole Sacred Order, and makes a very jest of Conscience'.[80] The newspaper seemed to believe there was a clear difference between the non-jurors' kind of schism and that of dissent, reacting in fury when the provisions of the Clarendon Code were used against this better sort of schismatic:

> On Wednesday last a Fine of five Shillings was levied by Warrant from the worshipful Justices Philips and Ellis, on the Persons who assembled at Mr. Haws's Nonjuring-Meeting at St. James's, according (as twas pretended) to the Form of an Act made in King Charles the Second's Time, entituled, *An Act to prevent and suppress seditious Conventicles, &c.* which, they say, according to the Meaning of that Act, must be those of the Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Muggletonians, Jews, &c. for the Liturgy of the Church of England was the Worship therein enacted. The Money is to be, or should be, distributed to the Poor, by the Overseers of the Parish.[81]

Here we can see plainly the newspaper's inconsistency in its attitudes to schism. Those laws that protected the privileges of the Church of England had to be applied with the strictest adherence when it came to those schismatics whose wider political views were anathema to the paper. However, when the schismatics in question held similar views on the nature of things to Mr Mist, the enforcement of those same laws became intolerable. Some schisms were more sinful than others.

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[79] Weekly Journal, 15 December 1716.
[80] Weekly Journal, 28 December 1717. The play was written by one of the newspaper's least favourite men, Colley Cibber. The newspaper's vendetta with Cibber and the politics of the theatre are discussed in Chapter 6, below.
[81] Weekly Journal, 14 December 1717.

Defending the Church: Convocation and the public sphere

Connected to all this – the theological crises of the Bangorian Controversy, the incursions of unitarian, deistic, and atheistic heterodoxies, the growing political legitimacy of dissent – was the absence of Convocation, the synodical body of the Church.[82] Convocation had steadily lost its prestige and practical power within the constitution since its surrender of the power of taxation over the clergy in the 1660s.[83] However, since the late 1690s many tories and high churchmen had argued for an equivalence between Parliament overseeing the affairs of the state and Convocation those of the Church.[84] This was essentially in order to provide opposition to those bishops the High Church saw as dangerously unsound on the rights of the Church, leaving it susceptible to the depredations of the whigs and their dissenting allies. Convocation – especially its 'lower house', composed of the lesser clergy – would in this dispensation act as a watchdog over the Church,

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[82] More properly, one should talk of 'Convocations' plural – there was one each for the two provinces of Canterbury and York – although all work tends towards the exclusion of the northern division and treat the institution in the singular. C. Russell, 'Parliament, the royal supremacy and the church', Parliamentary History 19 (2000), pp. 27-37; G.B. Switzer, 'The suppression of Convocation in the Church of England', Church History 1 (1932), pp. 150-62.

[83] Thus supplying a consitutional parrallel to the experience of the House of Commons in this period. The surrender of this fiscal power by Convocation, a fundamental change in the nature of the English constitution, happened in the obscurest of circumstances. P. Carter, 'Parliament, convocation and the granting of clerical supply in early modern England', Parliamentary History 19 (2000), pp. 14-26.

[84] Most notably the Jacobite Francis Atterbury, in his A letter to a convocation man (London, 1697). See Bennett, Tory crisis in church and state, pp. 125-38; Clark, English society, pp. 288-91.

policing those who deviated from the correct, orthodox, vision of the Church.[85]

Convocation had then been prorogued by George I in order to contain the bitter religious divisions that had surfaced in the early eighteenth century, exploded in the last years of the reign of Queen Anne, and had then culminated in the fratricidal hysteria of the Bangorian controversy.[86] This sense of an external cessation of hostilities was readily apparent in the newspaper's report of the prorogation:

> The Convocation lie still, being prorogued by Writs from the King, so that they cannot proceed against Bishop Hoadly this sitting, but resolve to be upon him in their next. We hear that before the Convocation broke up, Dr. Stanhope and two or three other Clergymen, came to the Synod and told them, they came to protest against the Representation which the Committee had drawn up against the Lord Bishop of Bangor; upon which, as we are told, Dr. Moss merrily answered, 'Gentlemen, you are come too late with your Protestation, for the King has protested before, not only against our Representation, but yours too; for we stand prorogued to the 10th of November next'. So the Protestors retired.[87]

From this report, however, it is clear that contemporaries were hardly aware that Convocation was not to meet again until the middle of the nineteenth century: the proceedings against the Bishop of Bangor were

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[85] Attempts to do so are explored in E. Duffy, '"Whiston's affair": the trials of a primitive Christian 1709-1714', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 27 (1976), pp. 129-50; M. Greig, 'Heresy hunt: Gilbert Burnet and the convocation controversy of 1701', Historical Journal, 37 (1994), pp. 569-92. T. Isaacs, 'The Anglican hierarchy and the reformation of manners 1688-1738', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 33 (1982), pp. 404-11, shows how some had tried to use Convocation to enforce Christian discipline before its permanent prorogation and attempts to find alternative mechanisms afterwards.

[86] Switzer, 'The suppression of Convocation', pp. 156-62.

[87] Weekly Journal, 25 May 1717. The newspaper would the next week retract its report that Stanhope was one of Hoadly's defenders, having been assured of his soundness on the matter, Weekly Journal, 1 June 1717.

merely in temporary abeyance, and it was seen as an institution in suspension rather than one defunct. Indeed, the *Weekly Journal* could initially carry reports confidently informing the public that 'We are inform'd, that the Convocation which is now prorogued to the 14th of February, will then sit to do business'.[88] In the years that followed, the now purely nominal elections to Convocation were solemnly announced to have taken place, and their results made public, in the same manner as elections to the House of Commons. For the writers and readers of the *Weekly Journal*, Convocation retained an institutional presence, but that presence was imaginary, not effective.

To the later commentator, this might appear a strange observation. How can an institution have an imaginary presence? It becomes less so when one considers the similar experience of another institution – Parliament itself. By the time George I first mothballed Convocation, Parliament had become a permanent institution. The wars that had followed the Glorious Revolution and the need for a sitting Parliament to grant the supplies to finance them had meant that annual sessions of Parliament had become embedded in the constitution. However, within living memory, two Stuart monarchs had attempted to govern without a parliament, envisioning that it would be at most a temporary and extraordinary expedient. For most of the 1680s, Parliament had as little real presence as Convocation would in the 1720s and 30s – 'between March 1681 and May 1685 England did not experience a sitting parliament, and nor would it again between November

[88] Weekly Journal, 7 December 1717.

1685 and January 1689'.[89] However, that absence did not mean that Parliament was forgotten. As Grant Tapsell has shown, 'whatever the intentions of the court, expectations of another imminent parliament remained rife in the country as a whole and were of considerable political importance'.[90] Similarly, while there were reasonable expectations of the return of an actually sitting Convocation (rather one that met nominally only, in order to be prorogued), the politics surrounding that institution remained of some importance in the country, more so to the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist.

In this case though the power of Convocation to defend orthodoxy was in a very limited potential energy rather than anything more kinetic. In the absence of an effective institution such as Convocation to keep the Church in the rigorous purity of orthodox belief, Mist's newspaper could set itself up in the role of an unofficial, public overseer of the nation's Church. (Mr Mist himself made the point when he opened his attacks on the *Independent Whig* by suggesting that they had only begun to publish when they were first 'secure from any Censure of the Convocation'.[91]) By doing so, the newspaper also defined itself in a crowded marketplace in a manner that was in some ways both complementary to and independent of its political stance in the secular sphere.

The presence of religious debate in the public sphere was not something a newspaper such as Mist's could be entirely comfortable with.

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[89] G. Tapsell, 'Parliament and political division in the last years of Charles II, 1681-5', Parliamentary History 22 (2003), p. 244.
[90] Tapsell, 'Parliament and political division', p. 245.
[91] Weekly Journal, 3 December 1720.

Religious truths were revealed, their proper interpretation fixed by the Church, and were not therefore something that could be properly debated between individuals. 'Antidialecti' wrote disapprovingly of how there was not 'a Tavern or Alehouse Kitchen within Musket-Shot of Charing-Cross, which escapes the Noise and Insults of Divinity-Wranglers':

> The Publick Converse formerly turned upon Politicks, but as that was sometimes attended with civil Animadversions, Religion a less dangerous, is become the universal Theme; the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Trinity, Prædestination, &c. are perpetual Subjects of Debate; the Old and New Testament are translated *de novo*; the Fathers are censured and vindicated, Councils criticized, Canons of the Church exploded and defended, old Creeds abrogated, new ones substituted, and absurd and incongruous Systems of Religion introduced. Add to all this, the holy and tremendous Name of All—y G—d is every Moment made use of, and as often abused, to the Incouragement of wicked, Offence of virtuous, and Corruption of modest Ears.[92]

However, Antidialecti did not offer up his targets to official reproof, whether that be the condemnation of a reinvigorated Convocation, or the criminal law, such as had been recommended for the heretical. Instead, the instrument of correction was closer at hand, available at three halfpennies a week, as he left 'these Religionary Babblers to the Chastisement of Mr. Mist; pursue them, Sir, with the Force of Expression and Elegancy of Style peculiar to all your Compositions; your Satire never falls unpointed, nor proves ineffectual, unless with the Incorrigible'.[93] The legitimacy of public discussion of theology may have been questionable, but the necessity of public censor was not.

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[92] Weekly Journal, 23 January 1720.
[93] Weekly Journal, 23 January 1720.

Conclusion

The political identity of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers was then clearly informed by a distinct position on the ecclesiastical affairs of the day. These religious views were complementary to those held regarding civil politics, but they were not by any means exclusively 'tory' or 'Jacobite'. One must be wary of the wholesale import of secular party labels into discussions of religious politics. This clear position on questions of faith marked out the *Weekly Journal*'s position in a crowded market just as its attitudes towards civil government did on questions of state. However, politics in the eighteenth century were not just defined by church and state, but also by questions of commerce and consumption.

Chapter 6

'I can't omit complaining of a vile Custom now in Fashion': the cultural politics of the *Weekly Journal*[1]

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, discussion has been of 'civil' and 'ecclesiastical' politics. These two terms were of contemporary use and reflect a division that would appear understandable to an educated Briton of the eighteenth century.[2] It is not so readily apparent that that same Briton would immediately grasp the subject matter of 'cultural politics'.[3] However, Nathaniel Mist's *Weekly Journal* clearly had a political persona that was as informed by its response to the material conditions of London life as it was by political theory or theological belief.

Mist's news coverage was filled with stories originating in the streets of London, whether in 'Change Alley or Drury Lane.[4] The attitudes revealed by his coverage of the new finance – whether it was to be excoriated in the case of the South Sea Company or, perhaps surprisingly, praised in the

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[1] Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, 22 February 1718.

[2] e.g. Anon., The independent power of the church not Romish, but primitive and catholick: a treatise pursuing the distinction between the ecclesiastical and civil powers (London, 1716); H. Curson, A compendium of the laws and government ecclesiastical, civil and military of Great Britain and Ireland, and dominions, plantations and territories thereunto belonging (2nd edn, London, 1716); J. Oldmixen, The critical history of England, ecclesiastical and civil (2 vols, London, 1726-30); P. de Rapin-Thoyras, The history of England as well ecclesiastical as civil (15 vols, London, 1728-31).

[3] The use of the adjective 'cultural' in this sense can only be dated back as far as the late nineteenth century, Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edn, 20 vols, Oxford, 1989), IV, pp. 120-1; R. Williams, Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society (London, 1976), pp. 76-82.

[4] Two representative sites of London culture, commercial and creative: the Royal Exchange in the City of London and the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden.

representative figure of John Law, the Scottish financier – staked out the politics of Mr Mist to his readers as clearly as did his attitudes to German kings or dissenting ministers.

Tory politeness

This chapter concerns itself with forms of politics that took place outside of the arenas of church and state. For some scholars, eighteenth-century culture is best seen through the conceptual prism of 'politeness'.[5] This does not mean solely a history of manners – a narrative of the ways in which gentlemen in powdered wigs would introduce their wives to dowager duchesses – although the forms in which polite manners were displayed are of course important. The concept is taken to be more overarching than that. It seeks to explain how a new form of sociability, a new method of interaction, was introduced and propagandised within British society in order to smooth over the demands of an increasingly commercial culture.[6] In the crudest theoretical terms then, politeness was a hegemonic force, something both propagated and accepted, reconciling a hierarchical society with the otherwise destabilising forces of commercial capitalism.[7]

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[5] L.E. Klein, 'Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century', Historical Journal 45:4 (2002), pp. 869-98 surveys 'the way that politeness has been used in current scholarship as an analytical category', p. 870. As one might expect from a historian who has pursued politeness so persistently, Klein finds that the category is a useful one: it 'has a certain substantive albeit flexible unity', p. 871.

[6] Klein, 'Politeness and the intepretation of the British eighteenth century', pp. 896-8.

[7] L.E. Klein, 'Property and politeness in the early eighteenth-century whig moralists: the case of the *Spectator*', in J. Brewer & S. Staves (eds), Early modern conceptions of property (London & New York, 1989), pp. 221-33

The founding texts of politeness are most often located within the works of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, and the journals of late Stuart England, the *Tatler* and *Spectator*.[8] (Studies of politeness are thus also more often than not studies of print culture.) Politeness as a concept has thus become bound up with a whig project, almost inextricably so.[9] 'Tory politeness' is thus a clumsy phrase when first encountered and one liable to be misinterpreted. It is not to be identified with 'impoliteness'. At all times, we must remember that impoliteness is something else again. Impoliteness was at the same time codes of behaviour that were seen to be outmoded, such as an overzealous application of the niceties of rank and deference, and also new forms of social practice that deliberately confronted the new order of things, such as the flamboyant dandyism.[10] 'Tory politeness' is neither of these things. It too attempted to reconcile commercial behaviour with social order. However, it sought to do so in a way that emphasised tory values: Christian (specifically Church of England) conduct, national as opposed to cosmopolitan virtues, and a sense of knowing and keeping one's place. This last aspect of tory politeness created an uneasy tension in the newspaper's

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[8] P. Langford, 'The uses of eighteenth-century politeness', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series, 12 (2002), p. 312. See especially L. Klein, Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness: moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England (Cambridge, 1994); Klein, 'Property and politeness in the early eighteenth-century whig moralists: the case of the *Spectator*', pp. 221-33.

[9] For a well-balanced discussion of the relationship between politeness and whig party ideology, see M. Peltonen, 'Politeness and whiggism, 1688-1732', Historical Journal 48:2 (2005), pp. 391-414. Peltonen emphasises the differences between individual whig authors in their conceptions of politeness, as well as recognising that such a discourse was accessible to non-whigs.

[10] Langford, 'The uses of politeness', pp. 313-14, 330-1.

cultural politics: how was this idealisation of a stable system of social rank to be reconciled with a commercial world that discouraged such stability?[11] The answer, though not a completely successful one, was to be found in a critique of taste. Undeserving wealth, such as that gained from the stocks, was associated with vulgar and gaudy display.

In the same way that Mr Spectator was a censor of public behaviour, so were Messrs Mist and Fog. We have already seen the newspaper's attack on 'Curllicism', the production of immoral books.[12] At heart, that attack was one based on Christian moral righteousness. This too was an inspiration for the newspaper's dislike of gambling, an 'impious Practice' according to 'Chas. Love-Church'.[13] This could be seen as Mist playing a part in a reformation of manners, a popular cause among the righteous, cutting across denominational lines in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[14]

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[11] There is some debate over the relative levels of social mobility in the eighteenth century, although this concentrates on the openness of the elite to the middling sorts rather than the newspaper's preoccupation with apprentices and shopkeepers. N. Rogers, 'Money, marriage, mobility: the big bourgeoisie of Hanoverian London', Journal of Family History 24 (1999), pp. 19-34; L. Stone & J.C.F. Stone, An open elite? England 1500-1880 (Oxford, 1984). The changing role of apprenticeship as a means of social mobility is examined in C.W. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1550-1800', in J. Barry & C.W. Brooks (eds), The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800 (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 52-83.

[12] See chapter 1, above.

[13] The Weekly Journal; or, Saturday's Post, 22 February 1718. For opposition to gambling in the early eighteenth century, see J.E. Evans, 'A sceane of utmost vanity: the spectacle of gambling in late Stuart culture', Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 31 (2002), pp. 1-20; R. Munting, 'Social opposition to gambling in Britain: an historical overview', International Journal of the History of Sport 10 (1993), pp. 295-312.

[14] J. Hoppit, A land of liberty? England 1689-1727 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 238-9; T. Isaacs, 'The Anglican hierarchy and the reformation of manners 1688-1738', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 33 (1982), pp. 391-411.

However, Mr Mist had no love for such institutions as the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, seeing them as suspiciously dissenting and tending to whiggery.[15] Love-Church's pseudonym suggests that he belonged to that part of society that strongly identified with the Church of England, to the exclusion of the other sects. His letter also plays upon another theme of Mr Mist's particular brand of politeness: a sense of social authenticity, of keeping one's rank and acting accordingly. Gambling had been once been the preserve of 'our People of Quality', but now even 'our Cits begin to run into this impious Practice'.[16] The concern for social order was a constant in the newspaper's use of politeness and one that goes some way to explaining its position on fashion. The fashions of the day and those who followed them were a constant source of mockery. 'Sir Fopling Tittle-Tattle' was an early representative of the beau monde to appear in the *Weekly Journal*:

> But prithee, dear Rogue, how came you, among all your News, never to take any Notice of the Change of Fashions? Are not they as proper for your Journals as Changes at Court? Split me, you Dog, it would recommend your Journal to the Beau Monde, and ingratiate you with all the Belles about Town. Let me beg thee then, thou dear Wag, instead of a Heap of cramp Names of Foreigners (which I am forc'd to spell before I can pronounce, and am constantly jeer'd about by the Ladies at the Tea-Table) to insert a

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[15] Isaacs, 'The Anglican hierarchy and the reformation of manners', pp. 401-3.

[16] The attempts of the "cits", or the citizens, of London to ape their betters, had been a constant source of confusion, drama, humour, and satire in the playhouses since the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, see M. Butler, 'Literature and the theatre to 1660', in D. Loewenstein & J. Mueller (eds), The Cambridge history of early modern English literature (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 576-80; T.N. Corns, 'Literature and London', in Loewenstein & Mueller, Early modern English literature, pp. 556-9; H. Love, 'Restoration and early eighteenth-century drama', in J. Richetti (ed.), The Cambridge history of English literature, 1660-1780, (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 123-8.

> polite History of Hoop-Pettitcoats, Top-Knots, Head-Dresses, Furbelows, Snuff, Boxes, Cravats, Perriwigs, Ruffles, and all that.[17]

Sir Fopling may have been a joke, but he did have a point. For all the newspaper's dismissive invective, it did indeed carry much coverage of the fashions of the day. No doubt this was an attraction to readers interested in London life. However, this coverage was uniformly negative. One reason for this is linked to the newspaper's concern for social propriety: the capacity for fashion to aid social dissemblers and social climbers was reason enough to distrust it. The fashionable, such as the fop, were by definition artificial:

> I am induced to this Discovery from the natural Antipathy I bear that apish Creature a Fop, who by a certain acquired Freedom and Gallantry, an affected Politeness of Address, and a hundred other superficial Accomplishments, and little insinuating Arts, which (if it be lawful to call 'em so) are his only Perfections.[18]

These superficialities and artifices led to the absurd situation (for Mr Mist and those who thought like him) whereby a tailor could have social commerce with a duke, as happened when the Duke of Newcastle organised a whig celebration for the anniversary of George I's accession to the British throne:

> his Grace going from one Room to another, to welcome his Guests, espied a Beau belonging to the Town, whom his Grace's Wine had robbed of his Wits, he ordered two of his Servants to take care of the Gentleman, and have him to some retired Place to take a Nap; the Servants obeyed their Master's Order; but just as they were going to leave him, they considered some no well

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[17] Weekly Journal, 29 March 1718; H. Greig, 'The beau monde and fashionable life in eighteenth-century London, c.1688-1800' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 2003), pp. 12-27.

[18] Weekly Journal, 27 August 1720; P. Carter, 'Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early eighteenth-century urban society', in H. Barker & E. Chalus (eds), Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representations and responsibilities (London, 1997), pp. 31-57.

> meaning Person might without Scruple pick his Pockets, they took what Money he had, in order to restore it when he came to his Senses, and in turning up his Waistcoat, they espied a Ribbon, with a Watch Key and a Seal hanging out of his Fob; they were as willing to take as much Care of the Watch as they had done before of the Money, which (by the by) was but *Three-half-pence*, and went to take out the Watch, but alas! to their great Amazement, it turned to *a Pin-cushion stuck with Needles and Pins*, indeed an Emblem of the Gentleman's Calling.[19]

Politeness was not the exclusive property of the whig party. No one could confuse the voice of the *Weekly Journal* as an oracle of any sort of whiggery. How is one to reconcile the newspaper's politeness with the 'whig project'? One answer is to see this as an eighteenth-century example of a recurring political phenomenon, where a political party, disfavoured in the nation, gets itself up in the rhetoric of their more popular rivals.[20] Like the adoption of the Spectatorial essay, this was an action of rank flattery.[21] This vision of things retains the primacy of whiggish politeness as the authentic type, and casts the tory version as a pale and essentially superficial and inconsistent copy.[22] However, it is possible to see tory politeness as an alternative interpretation, with its own particular concerns. A study of the cultural politics of the *Weekly Journal* illustrates how party political aims could be pursued from perspectives other than those of the whigs.

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[19] Weekly Journal, 19 September 1719.
[20] A contemporaneous example being the tory party's appropriation of the whigs' 'country' rhetoric, see D. Hayton, 'The "country" interest and the party system, 1689-*c*.1720', in C. Jones (ed.), Party and management in parliament 1660-1784 (Leicester, 1984), pp. 37-85.
[21] B. Cowan, 'Mr Spectator and the coffeehouse public sphere', Eighteenth-Century Studies 37 (2004), p. 360.
[22] L.E. Klein, 'The political significance of "politeness" in early eighteenth-century Britain', in G.J. Schochet (ed.), Politics, politeness, and patriotism (Washington, D.C., 1993), p. 74.

The Weekly Journal *at the theatre*

The *Weekly Journal*'s concern for the politics of the new consumption extended to monitoring the new spaces for display that were opening up in the city of Westminster, such as theatres, opera, and the masquerades. Once again, the newspaper attempted to act as police for the morals and virtues of the people, which could be corrupted by such luxurious activities. It cast itself as an overseer to all the individuals concerned – the managers, the actors, the singers, and the playwrights, as well as the consumers. However, it did not do so merely as some sort of vague commentary on a popular phenomenon. As one particular case, Mist's feud with Colley Cibber, shows, such criticisms could spring from specific complaints about political partisanship.

The differences between the newspaper's treatment of the different types of public space – the theatre, the masquerade, and the opera – can to some degree be distinguished by their relative openness. While the theatre and opera were essentially public, in the same manner as the coffee houses and the taverns (i.e. not open to all regardless of wealth, but easily accessible on payment of a fee), the masques, or costume balls, of the period were more private, the price of admission higher, the concern for masking one's public identity greater.[23] This led to a rather prurient coverage of the

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[23] S. Carter, '"This female proteus": representing prostitution and masquerade in eighteenth-century English popular print culture', Oxford Art Journal, pp. 57-79; T. Castle, Masquerade and civilization: the carnivalesque in eighteenth-century English culture and fiction (London, 1986), pp. 1-109; T. Castle, 'Eros and liberty at the English masquerade, 1710-90', Eighteenth-Century Studies 17 (1983-84), pp. 136-76; T. Castle, 'The culture of travesty: sexuality and masquerade in eighteenth-century England, in G.S. Rousseau

masques. However, their first appearance in the newspaper, in a letter from 'Aminidab' was so unstinting in its praise, so salesman-like in its patter, it is hard to see it as anything other than a 'puff' or veiled advertisement:

> Your Paper seeming to be calculated for an universal Entertainment, for which Purpose you appear ready to publish all Matters which may tend thereunto; it may not be unacceptable to the Town, if you gave an Account of the Masquerade at the Opera-House at the Hay-Market; and the rather because the ingenious Mr Headaker has contriv'd it in so noble a Manner, that it is not a little Honour to the English Nation, in that it is allow'd to be more magnificent than has been known in Italy, Venice, or any other Countries...
>
> There is an absolute Freedom of Speech, without the least Offence given thereby; which all appear better bred than to offer at any Thing prophane, rude, or immodest; but Wit incessantly flashes about in Repartee, Honour, and Good Humour, and all kinds of Pleasantry ... In short, the whole Ball was sufficiently illustrious in every Article of it for the greatest Prince to give on the most extraordinary Occasion. These Entertainments had gotten such a Reputation, that coming too late to get a Ticket my self, I was thereupon presented with three from Persons of Quality, who had subscrib'd for more, for two of which I was offer'd four Guineas a piece; but had more Satisfaction in finding a Present of them to two good Friends extremely Acceptable.[24]

This account emphasises the politeness and sociability of Heidegger's masques, as well as the desirability of the tickets among the fashionable sort. A ticket makes the ideal gift. As such, the letter can be taken as an example of the way that the language of politeness became a trope of consumption, a rhetoric of marketing.[25] It was not necessarily believed, but it was expected. It

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& R. Porter (eds), Sexual underworlds of the enlightenment (Manchester, 1987), pp. 156-80.

[24] Weekly Journal, 15 February 1718. By 'Headaker' is meant Johann Jakob Heidegger, the Swiss impresario often held reponsible for the introduction of Italian opera in England; J. Milhous & R.D. Hume, 'Heidegger and the management of the Haymarket Opera, 1713-17', Early Music 27 (1999), pp. 65-86.

[25] L.E. Klein, 'Politeness for plebes: consumption and social identity in eighteenth-century England', in A. Bermingham & J. Brewer (eds), The

was not however unchallenged. The counterpart to Aminidab's breathless wonderment was a language of vice and corruption: impoliteness.[26] The masques were linked to loose morals, especially to loose sexual morals.[27] A letter signed 'A.B.', relating a tale of a heavy-handed and coercive attempt at seduction on the part of an anonymous 'great man', is essentially a point by point refutation of Aminidab:

> [The masquerades] are perform'd with the greatest Splendor, Magnificence and Luxury imaginable. There are the noblest Wines and richest Cordials to inflame the Blood. There is all Freedom of Speech, while the Mask secures the Ladies from Detection, and encourages a Liberty, the Guilt of which all their Blushes would betray when bare-fac'd, till by Degrees they are innur'd to that which is out of the Power of their Vertue to restrain...
>
> There is no need of making Application from this, or saying what Influence the Examples of the Great have over their Inferiors, it being sufficiently demonstrated at the lesser Masquerades since at five Shillings or and three Shillings a piece, till at length the Common Women of the Town are become Members of those infamous Societies, and Debauchery promoted thereby to a Degree not known in former Ages.
>
> Though these Masquerades are practiced at Venice, Rome, Spain, and other hot Countries (notorious for Lewdness) yet they are seldom but at Carnival-Times, and where the Women are under such Restraint, that 'tis very difficult for them to execute their Assignations; but what Consequence they might have here, where the fair Sex have such perfect Liberty, we leave it to those who may find themselves most concerned therein, to Judge.[28]

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consumption of culture 1600-1800: image, object, text (London & New York, 1995), pp. 362-82.

[26] 'Impoliteness' is possibly a neglected category, given the importance placed on its opposing principle, but see H. Berry, 'Rethinking politeness in eighteenth-century England: Moll King's coffee house and the significance of "flash talk"', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series, 11 (2001), pp. 65-81. Berry suggests that we have neglected 'a "discorse of impoliteness", one that requires us to rethink politeness itself, not as a uniformly observed set of rules, nor as an attribute which all were striving to attain, but as a potentially repressive social force that eighteenth-century men and women, given the opportunity, took peculiar pleasure in transgressing', p. 81.

[27] Castle, Masquerade and civilization, pp. 38-51.

[28] Weekly Journal, 19 April 1718.

This diatribe of A.B.'s is far more typical of the tone of the *Weekly Journal* when confronted with the masques. They were iniquitous, encouraging of vice, and associated with the less agreeable traits of continental Europeans. Concern for the moral health of the nation was also present in the newspaper's discussion of other, more public, gatherings when the Town came together to watch theatre or opera. These were more public, in that individual identities were not entirely concealed. However, neither were they free of suspicion. The potential for social duplicity remained – inevitably so, as the theatre was an essential arena for fashionable display:

> Yesterday se'nnight, two Gentlemen, in a Frolick, went in a Coach to Drury-lane Playhouse, dress'd in blue Frocks, like Tallowchandlers, one with a Silver-lac'd hat, and a Tye Wig, the other only a black Velvet Cap: but there being no Play there that Night, they drove away to Lincolns-Inn-Fields, where they arriv'd after the first Act, and adorned one of the Front-Boxes with unusual Splendor, drawing upon them the Eyes of all the Audience.[29]

Criticising Colley Cibber

The newspaper's coverage of theatrical issues was also influenced by an ongoing vendetta with the writer and eventual poet laureate, Colley Cibber.[30] This dispute had its origins in personal politics, Mist despising Cibber for his play *The Non-Juror*, but extended to attacking Cibber's abilities as a poet and actor, and also as a manager of the Drury Lane

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[29] Weekly Journal, 7 October 1720.

[30] L.R.N. Ashley, Colley Cibber (rev. edn, Boston, 1988); H. Koon, Colley Cibber: a biography (Lexington, KY, 1986), is wrong in ascribing the Original Weekly Journal to Nathaniel Mist (it belonged to John Applebee and became in 1720 Applebee's Weekly Journal), p. 88, but is right in its judgement that 'Mist's *Weekly Journal* ... provided ample space to Cibber's enemies, p. 117.

theatre. We have already seen how performances of *The Non-Juror* had led Mr Mist to defend the reputation of the non-jurors.[31] Cibber himself, writing in self-justification in his memoirs, commented how the play was intended to mock the Jacobite cause; he felt that 'by making the artful Pretenders to Conscience, as ridiculous, as they were ungratefully wicked, was a Subject fit for the honest Satire of Comedy, and what might, if it succeeded, do Honour to the Stage, by shewing the valuable Use of it'.[32] Taking the plot of Molière's *Tartuffe* and interposing a non-juring priest for the Frenchman's religious hypocrite, the play was a success, takings reportedly rising close to £1,000.[33] One furious letter to the *Weekly Journal* described Cibber as a '*would-be-wit (in spite of Nature)*' who

> having more than once imposed upon the Town some good Plays for his own, has at last discovered his own stupid Barrenness of Genius, by not making, but turning a Play to a Subject which ought rather to be pitied than ridicul'd; in which he has heaped together more Malice. Nonsence and Obscenity than ever was presented in one dramatick Performance before ... I will not speak of the Want of Generosity to insult a fallen People, for the Wretch never could have one Spark of Honour in him.[34]

This would not be Mist's only public attack on the 'wretch'. As Cibber wrote, the *Weekly Journal*, 'for about fifteen Years following, scarce ever

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[31] See Chapter 5, above.
[32] C. Cibber, An apology for the life of Mr Colley Cibber, comedian, and late patentee of the Theatre Royal. With an historical view of the stage during his own time (London, 1740), p. 302; B. Glover, 'Nobility, visibility, and publicity in Colley Cibber's *Apology*', Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 42 (2002), pp. 523-39. The play may also be seen as a belated reaction to the 1697 attack on the stage by the nonjuring clergyman Jeremy Collier.
[33] The Original Weekly Journal, 21 December 1717. A correspondent to Mist accepted the truth of this report, but only to further allege that all the profits were lost by Cibber at the gaming tables, along with an additional £80 that had been raised as a benefit for his daughter, Weekly Journal, 1 March 1718.
[34] Weekly Journal, 1 March 1718.

fail'd of passing some of his Party Compliments upon me: The State, and the Stage, were his frequent Parallels, and the Minister, and *Minheer Keiber* the Manager, were as constantly droll'd upon'.[35] It was clear to readers that the newspaper was interested in learning more of Cibber, one paragraph in the news column pleading that 'Another Gentleman writes to us a terrible Story of Mr. Cib—the Poet; if the Fact were true, we own it is worth the World's knowing it, and we shall not be backward; We cannot be Slanderers even where we are willing to be Satyrists; let but a reasonable Proof of the Story be had, and we shall do him all the Justice he can desire'.[36]

Such attacks were relentless. After a comparatively long spell without mentioning the writer in the pages of the newspaper, Mr Mist assured Cibber that lest he worry that he was being ignored he should '*excuse us for not taking Notice of Him so long since, we having been employ'd in a Subject of greater Importance*; *but think proper to let him know that we have Materials by us concerning Him, which we shall now shortly communicate*'.[37] It was not enough for the *Weekly Journal* that Cibber was only a bad man; he was also a bad writer and a bad actor. His plays were 'pirated' from other authors, and inferior copies at that, 'such Authors as this ... are fed like Hogs in Westphalia, one is tied to the Tail of Another, and the last feeds only upon the Excrements of the rest, and therefore is generally when full grown, no

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[35] Cibber, Apology, p. 303. Cibber did indeed sometimes play a parallel to Walpole in some of the newspaper's essays, such as when Mr Fog wrote that 'It is observ'd, that your very *ignorant Ministers* are always the *most Arbitrary*; and I find that these severe Measures proceeded from the Advice of *Keyber*', Fog's Weekly Journal, 15 March 1729.
[36] Weekly Journal, 12 April 1718.
[37] Weekly Journal, 7 April 1722. Italics as in original.

bigger than a Pig'.[38] His acting was clumsy, one sarcastic report noting that 'an Order came from the Lord Chamberlain, to suspend the very facetious Mr. Cibber the Comedian, (the well known Author of the Non-Juror) from acting; and, 'tis wished, the House may not be considerable Losers for want of the Performance of so worthy a Gentleman'.[39] The newspaper would later argue that this meagre talent for acting, combined with a proud vanity that disinclined Cibber from encouraging any actors capable of upstaging him, meant that 'that we have the *worst Company of Players at present of any Stage in* Europe'.[40]

It was not always the case that Mist's newspaper reported the vicissitudes of Cibber's life with adequate evidence, Mist once going so far as to report the death of his antagonist:

> On Monday last died Mr Cibber, an Actor at the Theatre in Drury Lane; he was notorious for his late Comedy call'd the *Nonjuror*, which was calculated to triumph over the Misfortunes of those unhappy Gentlemen, who lately feel under the Displeasure of the Government, for their Attempt in favour of the Chevalier, and by which he lost himself much of the Reputation he acquired by his former Performances.[41]

Once again, the newspaper stressed that it was for the sake of the reputation of the non-jurors that it disliked Cibber. It was this incident that Cibber remembered in his *Apology*:

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[38] Weekly Journal, 18 February 1720.
[39] Weekly Journal, 26 December 1719.
[40] Mist's Weekly Journal, 20 January 1728.
[41] Weekly Journal, 18 April 1719. It is possible – though unlikely – that Mist was repeating the trick of the *Tatler* in reporting the death of an antagonist as a joke. Certainly, this was in Mr Mist's mind as an excuse when he corrected the error: 'as the most famous Tatler said of old Partridge, the Almanac-maker, that if he was not dead, he should ha' been dead for any good he was like to do while he was alive', Weekly Journal, 2 May 1719.

> I read in one of [Mist's] Journals, the following short Paragraph, *viz. Yesterday dies Mr.* Colley Cibber, *late Comedian of the Theatre-Royal, notorious for writing the* Nonjuror. The Compliment, in the latter part, I confess, I did not dislike, because it came from so impartial a Judge; and it really so happen'd, that the former part of it was very near being true; for I had that very Day just crawled out, after having been some Weeks laid up by a Fever: However, I saw no use, in being thought to be thoroughly dead, before my Time, and therefore had a Mind to see, whether the Town cared to have me alive again: So the Play of the *Orphan* being to be acted that Day, I quietly stole myself into the Part of the *Chaplain*, which I had not been seen in, for many Years before. The Surprize of the Audience at my unexpected Appearance on the very Day, I had been dead in the News, and the Paleness of my Looks, seem'd to make it a Doubt, whether I was not the Ghost, of my real Self departed: But when I spoke, their Wonder eas'd itself by an Applause; which convinc'd me, they were then satisfied, that my Friend *Mist* had told a *Fib* of me. Now, if simply to have shewn myself in broad Life, and about my Business, after he had *notoriously* reported me dead, can be called a Reply, it was the only one, which his Paper, while alive, ever drew from me.[42]

The result of this *coup de théâtre* was a fierce attack in the whig *Flying Post* on the standards of Mist's reporting, an attack which Mr Mist countered by again casting doubt on the rival newspaper's trustworthiness – if '*Mr. Mist*, has gained *Immortal Honour*, by believing a Lie of another Man's making, how many Immortalities of Praise are due to *Mr. Ridpath*, that has made so many for other People to believe'.[43] A vendetta against one whig thus collided with a vendetta against another. The attack on Cibber acts as an illustration of how party political beliefs, news reporting and cultural resources such as the London theatre came into conjunction with one another. Indeed, it is a sign of how linked Mist's personal animus against Cibber had become with the political identity of his newspaper that when the newspaper underwent its forced metamorphosis into *Fog's Weekly Journal*, the letter of instruction that

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[42] Colley, Apology, pp. 303-4.
[43] Weekly Journal, 2 May 1719.

Mr Mist addressed to Mr Fog, supposedly from the afterlife but presumably from France, was insistent that the attacks on Cibber should continue to be observed:

> I charge you particularly to keep *Keyber* under due Correction; have a strict Eye over him, and call him to Order, whenever he *steals*, that is to say, whenever he writes. – I have met here with Sir *John Van—*, one *Barnaby*, and several others, who have told me more of him than I ever knew before.[44]

However, the vendetta against Cibber extended beyond personal attacks on the whig playwright. There was also criticism of the manner in which he managed the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, as well as support for the rival theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The newspapers did not follow in the footsteps of Jeremy Collier and disdain all theatre.[45] As one might expect, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, understood as a tory satire on the Walpole regime, received much support, for instance defending it against complaints that it encouraged criminality:

> Certain People, of an envious Disposition, attribute the Frequency of the late Robberies to the Success of the *Beggars Opera*, and the Pleasure the Town takes in the Character and Impunity of Captain *Mackheath*; but others, less concerned in that Affair, and more for the Publick, account for them by the general Poverty and

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[44] Fog's Weekly Journal, 28 September 1728. Mr Mist had a few months previously reported Cibber's handling of the works of Sir John Vanbrugh: 'On Wednesday last a most horrid, barbarous, and cruel Murder was committed at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, upon a posthumous Child of the late Sir *John Vanbroog*, by one who, for some Time past, has gone by the Name of KEYBER. It was a fine Child born, and would certainly have lived long, had it not fallen into such cruel Hands', Mist's Weekly Journal, 13 January 1728.

[45] This was subject to circumstance. Theatre was, in general, fine, but had the potential to become a problem. For instance, it was reported that the establishment of a new theatre in Aldgate was seen as a corrupting influence by the traders of that ward, as 'the said House will be of ill Consequence in that trading Part of the City, by promoting Idleness instead of Industry, and so corrupting the Morals of the Younger People', Fog's Weekly Journal, 27 December 1729.

> Corruption of the Times, and the Prevalency of some powerful Examples.[46]

A note on opera

Another aspect of the newspaper's tory politeness can be illustrated in its coverage of the dramatic arts: its trumpeting of national, English virtues over the cosmopolitan values of whiggism. The growing dominance of Italian singers in the opera offended Mr Mist on several grounds and gave 'a Man a most deplorable Prospect of the present Degeneracy of Taste, and the miserable Decay of common Sense amongst our People of sudden Fortunes, who, I find, are the Encouragers of this Entertainment'.[47] The taste for Italian opera was, like all areas of fashion, an artificial deviation from natural good sense.[48] In this case, the fashionable flocked to an art form they could not possibly understand, lacking the linguistic skills:

> Musick is so generally approv'd of in *England*, that it is look'd upon a want of Breeding not to be affected by it, insomuch that every Member of the *Beau Monde* at this Time either do, or, at least, think it necessary to appear as if they did understand it; and, in order to on this Deceit, it is requisite every one, who has the Pleasure of thinking himself a fine Gentleman, should, being first

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[46] Mist's Weekly Journal, 2 March 1728; J. Richardson, 'John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*, and forms of resistance', Eighteenth-Century Life 24 (2000), pp. 19-30; C. Winton, 'John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*: a case study', in J. Donahue (ed.), The Cambridge history of British theatre: vol. 2, 1660-1895 (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 126-44.

[47] Mist's Weekly Journal, 29 October 1726. The politics of opera, both in their content and reception, have been examined in R.D. Hume, 'The politics of opera in late seventeenth-century London', Cambridge Opera Journal 10 (1998), pp. 15-44; P.K. Monod, 'The politics of Handel's early London operas, 1711-1718', Journal of Interdisciplinary History 36 (2005), pp. 445-72.

[48] It has been suggested that the way in which Italian opera divided tastes was caused by its capacity to confuse traditional social values, especially gender roles, S. Aspden, 'An infinity of factions": opera in eighteenth-century Britain and the undoing of society', Cambridge Opera Journal 9 (1997), pp. 1-19.

> laden with a Competency of Powder and Essence make his personal Appearance every Opera Night at the Haymarket, tho' not less ignorant of the Performance than of the Language it is perform'd in.[49]

The newspaper once more employed lampoon as a weapon, mocking the desire of the fashionable to keep up, such as the frustrated would-be patron of the opera 'Maria Impatience', who felt "that the Opera is become the very *Touchstone* of Sense and Breeding, and no one can pretend to either who don't frequent it, without making themselves ridiculous'.[50] In the opinion of the *Weekly Journal*, the situation was quite the reverse. It was the operagoers who were ridiculous. In this particular case, the fashion for opera was considered to be harmful for the national interest, not only importing the Italian language and Italian singers, but also Italian luxury and degeneracy:

> The modern *Italians* are the People who are most bewitch'd to this soft Amusement; they have, with great Study and Assiduity, endeavour'd to cultivate and improve it, and they have given the Dignity of a Science to a Thing not design'd, either for the Improvement of the Manners, or the Instruction of the minds of the People; but, while they were making it their Glory to be the first in an effeminate Art, the martial Spirit of their Ancestors departed from amongst them, and it is now some Ages that they have been looked upon as the most contemptible People in the World.[51]

As we have seen, Mr Mist blamed much of what he saw as the degeneracy of eighteenth-century culture on the newly wealthy, those who had successfully outstripped the certainties of tory social authenticity. The cultural politics of the newspaper were, at root, a commentary on wider social changes that had been underway since the Glorious Revolution and

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[49] Mist's Weekly Journal, 18 December 1725.
[50] Mist's Weekly Journal, 28 May 1726; Apsden, 'An infinity of factions', pp. 13-16.
[51] Fog's Weekly Journal, 9 May 1730.

before. The newspaper's dislike for gambling, for the new fashions, for extravagant consumption, for the Italian opera, all stemmed from a rejection of the values and social consequences of the financial revolution. The most obvious example of this can be seen in the *Weekly Journal*'s coverage of the financial crises that shook both London and Paris in the early 1720s, not only in the ways that such coverage was similar, but also in the differences.

Finance, or fortunes contrasted: John Law and the South Sea Company

The generations following the events of 1688 lived through not only a political revolution, but also a financial one. The two phenomena were inextricably linked. The political revolution that saw the replacement of James II – and his foreign policy support for the France of Louis XIV – with the anti-French William III led to a series of wars that created both the need for an overhaul in the way Britain financed her military operations and the conditions which made it possible.[52] The financial revolution had innovatory implications for society. The new forms of property – stocks, shares, and other monetary instruments – created new sources of wealth.[53] While they were exploited by traditional elites already rich through land-ownership, the new property was also accessible to outsiders, and the creation of a 'monied

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[52] J. Brewer, The sinews of power: war, money and the English state 1688-1783 (London, 1989), pp. 29-134; P.G.M. Dickson, The financial revolution in England: a study in the development of public credit, 1688-1756 (London, 1967), pp. 39-215; P. K. O'Brien, 'The political economy of British taxation, 1660-1815', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 41 (1988), pp. 1-32. H. Roseveare, The financial revolution, 1660-1760 (London, 1991), pp. 6-28 notes the roots of financial reform in the Interregnum and Restoration periods.

[53] Roseveare, Financial revolution, pp. 42-46.

interest' was viewed with great suspicion by those who saw something disreputable, something dangerous, something corrupting, in the new forms of property.[54] This divide between landed and monied interests became entangled – although not quite so neatly as some would have us believe – with the party political split between tory and whig and the schism between court and country.[55]

Mist himself shared this suspicion of the monied interest and his newspapers reflected the attitude of their owner.[56] As had tory predecessors of the reign of Queen Anne, such as Jonathan Swift, Mr Mist fulminated against the mysteries of 'stock-jobbing', at one point for instance giving room for one correspondent, 'Justitia' to call for the practice to be prohibited.[57] Stockjobbers were inherently untrustworthy men, whose values were as questionable as their credentials; Mist delighted in reporting how they spread false stories in order to inflate the share prices.[58] Those whose fortunes

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[54] J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition (Princeton, 1975), pp. 423-61.
[55] H.T. Dickinson, Liberty and property: political ideology in eighteenth-century Britain (London, 1977), pp. 106-10.
[56] Mist's entirely negative opinion of this 'artificial Wealth' is laid out in a letter to the Jacobite court, blaming government debts, pensions, and the dissenters for the 'decay of trade', Mist to O'Brien, 5 January 1733, Windsor, Royal Archives, Stuart Papers, 158/69.
[57] Weekly Journal, 1 April 1721. Swift had attacked stockjobbers in The Examiner, 2 November 1710, and other tories followed, Hoppit, A land of liberty?, p. 128. However, it should be remembered whig voices were also raised against stock-jobbing as a corrupting influence – this was one of the major themes of Trenchard and Gordon as 'Cato', e.g. J. Trenchard & T. Gordon, Cato's letters (4 vols, London, 1724), pp. 15-19
[58] Weekly Journal, 5 December 1720. This particular sin of the stock-jobbers tied in nicely with Mr Mist's castigation of whig journalists who, as he saw it, spread false reports of foreign affairs to further their party aims, see Chapter 2, above. The undoubted links between print culture and credibility are now beginning to be explored, for example in N. Glaisyer, 'Calculating credibility:

resided in the stocks were generally noted in order to be sneered at, such as one 'Mr. Grigsby, a Clerk in the South-Sea Company, who by Stock-Jobbing has attained the Character of a 50000*l*. Man, has purchased the late Mr. Goff's House, and the Estate belonging to it, at Wanstead in Essex, for 7500*l*'.[59] When Sir Richard Child was raised to the Irish nobility, it was sarcastically declared to be 'to the everlasting Honour of Stockjobbing'.[60] Thus again was the newspaper concerned with the disparity it saw between social standing and social worth.

The *Weekly Journal* was also in the forefront of the contemporary criticism of the 'bubbles', Mr Mist at one point issuing a mock proclamation against them.[61] The most renowned of the bubbles remains the one surrounding the stock of the South Sea Company. The South Sea Company and its attendant Bubble have today become a metaphor. Any period of financial over-exuberance becomes another South Sea bubble – truly history teaching by example.[62] However, recent work has shown that many of the assumptions one makes about the South Sea Company are based upon a number of 'myths': the moral does not quite fit the history.[63] The essential

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print culture, trust and economic figures in early eighteenth-century England', Economic History Review, forthcoming.

[59] Weekly Journal, 21 June 1720.

[60] Weekly Journal, 26 April 1718.

[61] Weekly Journal, 19 March 1720. Hoppit, A land of liberty?, pp. 334-8.

[62] This morality tale is told in a number of works. M. Balen, A very English deceit: the secret history of the South Sea bubble and the first great financial scandal (London, 2002) is the latest iteration of a book that is published every ten years or so. Mr Balen's contemporary relevance is lent by the 1990s bubble in shares in internet start-ups. We learn neither how the bubble was 'very English' or in what way it is a 'secret history'.

[63] J. Hoppit, 'Myths of the South Sea bubble', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series, 12 (2002), pp. 141-65.

facts of the matter are thus familiar and need only the briefest of outlines.[64] The South Sea Company, a trading company established by the tories in 1711, a counterpart of the far more profitable and whig East India Company, was initially intended to have a monopoly on trade to the south seas, and access to the slave trade through the *assiento* won as part of Britain's spoils from the War of Spanish Succession. That trade proved fruitless and other sources of revenue were looked for, and they were found in Britain's National Debt. The Company took on some £31 million of the National Debt. As the Company had no real sources of income, this deal could only be financed by ramping up the Company's share value, by deceit if necessary – and it was.

The mania for South Sea shares had by the beginning of the 1720s 'become the General Talk of the Town and Country'.[65] The rising prices were reported each week in the paragraph regularly set aside for movements in stock prices. It insinuated itself in other polite forms, such as when a correspondent named 'Clarinda' asked Mr Mist and his readers for advice on matters of the heart: she 'who [has] made nothing by the *South-Sea*, have at length got a *South-Sea* Gallant: but whether to take, or to refuse, his *Stock*, I am as yet entirely undetermined'. Had anyone, she asked, any 'kind Advice for a distrest young Virgin, who is afraid of letting her Interest put too strong a Force upon her Inclinations?'[66] Similarly, during the fall of the value of the stocks, a male correspondent complained of a lover whose affections were too sensitive to market fluctuations:

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[64] J. Carswell, The South Sea bubble (rev. edn, Stroud, 1993), pp. 144-71 recounts the pricking of the bubble.
[65] Weekly Journal, 16 April 1720.
[66] Weekly Journal, 20 August 1720

> A Barometer gives not a more sure Indication of the weather, a Dial of the Hour, or the Moon of the Tide, than her Face has for some Months past of the Rise and Fall of Stock: From the late Reflux from a 1000, she has gradually decreased her Favours and sunk 'em by Degrees with all imaginable Niceness, in her regard to the sinking Stock.[67]

Thus 'polite' tropes of print culture could serve precisely the opposite ends of the whig project. Where the *Tatler* and *Spectator* sought to harmonise sociability with the new commercial culture, the *Weekly Journal* used the same sort of language to mock the polite and cast suspicion upon the new finance. However, the newspaper's response to the collapse of the South Sea scheme is not best characterised by politeness, but by a violent excoriation of all involved in the affair.

The reaction of the newspaper to the political and financial crisis that engulfed the South Sea Company in 1721 should come as no surprise to anyone. The newspaper led the way in denouncing as 'publick Traytors' all those who had a hand in that Company's murky affairs. The South Sea Crisis was a perfect moment for the paper, an opportunity to denounce the whig government, the whig party in general, the stock-jobbers, the bubbles, and the corrupt vanity and luxury of all those who had participated.[68] It was even able to take a swipe at the Hanoverian monarch, by reminding readers of his place in the Scheme.[69] All very predictable perhaps. However, one should be careful not to see this as the defining word on the attitudes of the newspaper

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[67] Weekly Journal, 22 October 1720.
[68] Mist was hardly alone, Hoppit, 'Myths', pp. 145-8, 160-3.
[69] The correspondent to Mr Mist was ostensibly attacking the pride of the South Sea Company directors, who had become so superior 'that if the King himself had not been their Governor, we might suspect they would have attempted to have governed him', Weekly Journal, 1 July 1721. For George I's part in the affair, see Carswell, South Sea bubble, pp. 256-61.

towards the new finance. As a counterpoint, and an illustration of the way the newspaper's political identity was apparent in its coverage of financial affairs, one can contrast the coverage the South Sea crisis received with the concurrent and ostensibly similar financial performances of John Law in Paris.

Over the same period, the foreign news columns of Mist's newspaper were enlivened by the doings of one John Law. Law was an adventurer and an economist *avant la lettre*.[70] Forced into exile from his native Scotland following a duel that had had fatal consequences for his adversary, Law had eventually arrived at a position of great influence in the regency administration of France.[71]

Initial coverage of Law's financial restructuring of the French state, early reports that 'the Stock of the new united East and West India Company in France is Stock-jobbed up to such a Height, that the like has never been heard of in so little Time in any Part of the World', may well have led some readers to suspect that France was undergoing precisely the same

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[70] The best available biography of John Law is A.E. Murphy, John Law: economic theorist and policy-maker (Oxford, 1997), which is comprehensive, occasionally speculative, and more than a little ahistorical, casting Law as a man ahead of his time and conceptualising his theories in terms that Law himself could not possibly have employed. Murphy is not, however, the only commentator who has seen Law as an eighteenth-century incarnation of John Maynard Keynes, e.g. E.B. Wilson, 'John Law and John Keynes', Quarterly Journal of Economics 62 (1948), pp. 381-95.

[71] R. Bonney, 'France and the first European paper money experiement', French History 15 (2001), pp. 255-6; C. Jones, The great nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon 1715-99 (London, 2002), pp. 61-73; A.E. Murphy, 'The evolution of John Law's theories and policies 1707-1715', European Economic Review 34 (1991), p. 1109.

experiences as Britain.[72] This would be a fair assumption, considering Law's scheme was in fact the original inspiration for the South Sea Company's financial manoeuvrings. They could, no doubt, expect similar stories of the extravagances of the new wealth emanating from the rue Quinquampoix as they had from 'Change Alley. However, while there were stories accounting the number of grand new carriages being produced for the *arrivistes*, Mist's newspaper was to take a slightly different line:

> The same Letters from Paris tell us, that by the new System of the Finances it is demonstrated, the King's Revenue will be augmented near a Hundred Millions, and that the People will nevertheless pay above a Hundred Million less in Taxes ... the Affairs in France are under a strange and most surprizing Operation; and our Letters from thence say, there appears nothing but new Clothes, new Figures, and an infinite Number of Families raised to new Fortunes; so that they see Eight Hundred new Coaches set upon Paris, and the Families enriched purchase new Plate, new Furniture, new Clothes, and new Equipage: So that there is a most prodigious Trade there, and Money flows like the Water of the *Seine*.[73]

So while the new money was there, with the new consumer frenzy in tow, what was corrupting in Britain was entirely to the benefit of the fortunes of the French. To anyone used to the newspaper's generally cynical opinion when confronted with any great man, the hyperbole of the coverage is simply astonishing. The Mississippi Company's successes were fuelled by Law's personal genius, Law who 'has found out a miraculous Expedient for this, so advantageous that no Body will be able to resist it'.[74] The newspaper carried a report from Berlin merely to relay the astonishment felt throughout Europe for what the Scotsman was achieving in Paris. And while the German

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[72] Weekly Journal, 25 July 1719.
[73] Weekly Journal, 12 September 1719.
[74] Weekly Journal, 26 September 1719.

newspaper considered the possibility that Law possessed some sort of magic power, the newspaper's correspondent from Paris wrote that

> Though we have no Notion here of Mr. Laws's Witchcraft or Magick, yet we must acknowledge that he has done such Things, and continues to do such Things every Day, as not only are inimitable by others, but indeed may be esteemed a kind of Prodigy in themselves ... In a Word, as it's incredible what this Mr. Lawes has done to Aggrandize the Kingdom of France, and to make the King's Affairs easy, and set them free from Debt; so it is not to be expressed what Prospect of further Designs that Gentleman has in his Head, to extend the Commerce of France beyond all that was ever thought of before.[75]

The differences in the reception offered by the *Weekly Journal* for what are essentially similar experiments in debt management were, then, wildly divergent. It is especially odd when one notes that 'it was the success of the Mississippi Company, a success mirrored in the jump in its share price from 200 livres in 1717 to over 9,000 livres in 1720, that generated the environment and momentum for the South Sea Company to undertake a similar experiment'.[76] This, it seems, was not an association that occurred to Mr Mist. Neither can it be explained by the greater social virtues of the French. Law's System did not have vastly different cultural consequences in France than other experiments in the new finance had in London, but there was certainly a double standard in the newspaper's reporting. While the *Weekly Journal* would make the occasional note of the rise of luxury in France – such as reporting new sumptuary laws passed against the 'new Gentry, who having hastily got great Estates by the Stocks, are in as much

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[75] Weekly Journal, 10 October 1719.

[76] Murphy, 'The evolution of John Law's theories and policies', pp. 1122-3; R.S. Dale, J.E.V. Johnson, & L. Tang, 'Financial markets can go mad: evidence of irrational behaviour during the South Sea bubble', Economic History Review 58 (2005), p. 234.

haste to spend them' – there was nothing like the reams of violent screeds that castigated the corruption of the British.[77]

One explanation for this disparity can be found in Jacobite politics. John Law was a Jacobite, with links to the Stuart court in exile.[78] Though a convert to Catholicism – high office in France being well worth a mass – Law's road to Rome had started with Scottish episcopalianism, the religious equivalent of being an English non-juror. He was in correspondence with the Jacobite court in part of the machinations that would reconcile France to the Stuart cause. Most visibly, he had personally restored the pensioners of the court of James II's recently deceased queen, who would otherwise have been in a most miserable position.[79] This last act of charity was admiringly reported in the *Weekly Journal*:

> It is impossible to express the Bounty and Munificence of Mr. Lawes, and what a World of Money he gives away on charitable and generous Occasions ... He gave the same Day, a hundred thousand Crowns to the Relief of his Countrymen, the English and Scots, at St. Germaine's, who were formerly Dependants upon the Court of the late Queen Dowager of England, and whose Pensions ceased at her Death, by which they were reduced to extreme Poverty.[80]

The *Weekly Journal*'s support for Law was also presented as a criticism of the regime in Britain. Why, asked the newspaper, had this man

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[77] Weekly Journal, 13 February 1720.
[78] M.G.H. Pittock, 'John Law's theory of money and its roots in Scottish culture', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 133 (2003), pp. 398-400; E. Cruickshanks & H. Erskine-Hill, The Atterbury plot (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 31-55.
[79] Cruickshanks & Erskine-Hill, The Atterbury plot, pp. 37-9. While Law's involvement in Jacobite scheming is quite clear, it does not follow that by this point he had 'come to regard James's interests as his own', Atterbury plot, p. 41.
[80] Weekly Journal, 26 December 1719.

been lost to Britain, why was his genius in the service of a rival power? Early reactions had drawn quiet comparison between the fortunes of the two nations, one correspondent wondering whether 'may not something be started in the World for us, that we, like the French, may pay off our Debts as well as they?'[81] Another wrote that 'this is what Mr. Law has done for a *Foreign* Country, and I doubt not but that Time will come, when you will see him as forward, as he is able, to serve his *own*; when his greatest Enemies (if it be possible for so much Worth and Goodness to have any) shall be forced to confess him the SAVIOUR of France at least'.[82] Even as the System began to collapse, his admirers found room made for them in the columns of the *Weekly Journal*. As one admiring letter, written in response to the first signs of the System's collapse, put it:

> nothing is more evident than that Mr. Law has been of an universal Service to France, and that by his Genius alone he has retrieved the Loss of the late long and miserable War, and put the sinking Credit of that nation in such a flourishing Condition as was never known before ... in losing him, we have suffered the greatest Loss that England could sustain.[83]

Another made the point more starkly. In the same issue of the *Weekly Journal* as Mr Mist drew attention to the vast, almost incomprehensibly large, quantities of stock that would have to be sold for the South Sea Company scheme to be a success, in order, presumably, to reinforce the scepticism of his readers, there was yet another report of the flourishing state of France:

> The [Mississippi] Company go on with their Projects, and buying of Goods, building of Ships, and settling their Colonies in Order to

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[81] Weekly Journal, 26 December 1719.
[82] Weekly Journal, 5 March 1720.
[83] Weekly Journal, 11 June 1720. Mist's correspondent ignores the niceties of Law's Scottish identity.

> go on with their Trade: The great Designs of Mr. *Law* in the Main are almost brought to bear; he has not only formed, but well nigh compleated and perfected all he undertook; that People begin to be sensible of the great Advantage they are like to reap by it, and as the Thing grows plain to them, they grow easy; the Government is grown rich, Credit begins to revive in France, and the Commerce to be restored; and as the Consequence of all this, the Government is establishing it self, fortifying of Towns, building of Men of War, forming their Armies, amassing of Wealth, and by all Ways possible adding to their Strength, making their People secure and happy at home, and themselves valued, because to be feared abroad.[84]

This can, of course, be read like mirror writing as a critique of the present state of Great Britain. Law had had his success in France, but his system would work just as well in Britain. It could then be suggested that, albeit only for a while, Law's System was presented to the reading public as a Jacobite alternative to British financial policy, a counter to the whig fear that a Stuart restoration would lead to the repudiation of the National Debt and the ruin of the middling sorts. Its ultimate failure did not receive such close attention in the *Weekly Journal*, but by that point all eyes were on the South Sea.

Conclusion

The newspapers of Nathaniel Mist possessed a political identity that was strongly defined by its coverage of the cultural changes transforming London and the nation at large in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. It was necessary for Mist's newspapers to cover the commercial culture of its day, but it did not do so from the viewpoint of a passive chronicler. The position the newspaper took was informed by a distrust of social change

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[84] Weekly Journal, 16 April 1720.

common to tory and Jacobite critiques of Britain's development following the Glorious Revolution. However, it did not do so by entirely rejecting the common polite rhetoric of the day, but rather by fashioning it to its own ends. The newspapers were in many ways a tory version of the whig *Spectator*.

Much of this chapter has been informed by studies of politeness – more specifically on a 'tory politeness'. This is in some ways an attempt to detach any concept of politeness from too intimate an association with the whig party and its attendant policies and varieties of ideology. Eighteenth-century print culture was too multifaceted to be dominated by one political party. However, a concept of tory politeness – and concepts of impoliteness not considered here – should lead one to reconsider the overall value of politeness as a category with which to define eighteenth-century cultural experience. It can be helpful, of course, but it can also easily become a category that historians grant an all too encompassing explanatory power. By illustrating that there could be varieties of politeness – and, if there was a whig politeness, and a tory politeness, could one not imagine a republican politeness as well? – it is worth reflecting on the ways in which politeness did not matter at all.

This consideration of the cultural politics of the newspaper also brings to an end this section on how the newspapers formed a coherent political identity that could be communicated to the public. By considering its political, religious and cultural aspects, some of the major features of this identity have been sketched. Regrettably, it is just that – a sketch. Other forms of politics have not been considered which were just as much a part of

the political identity of the newspapers. For example, there has been no consideration of 'judicial politics': how attitudes towards the law, the making of laws, and enforcement of them, helped define the politics of the *Weekly Journal*. There will be other examples that will occur. However, these three chapters have fleshed out a little more what it means when one says that Mist's newspapers were tory or Jacobite.

The next part of the project builds the studies of how the newspaper was shaped by its contents, and how these contents projected a political identity, by examining in some detail the crisis of 1728, the printing of the so-called 'Persian Libel' that had such dire consequences for those involved with the newspaper.

PART THREE

THE NEWSPAPER IN CRISIS, 1728

Chapter 7

'Treason and Insolence carryed, in this paper, beyond any Instance that perhaps has ever been known': The Persian Libel[1]

Introduction

If historians remember Nathaniel Mist at all, it is for the events of 1728. The so-called Persian Libel incident was the great crisis which resulted in the paper temporarily closing down, the permanent exile of Mist himself to France, and the rebranding of the paper as *Fog's Weekly Journal*. However, it is not enough to content oneself with using the incident as a scene in the morality play that is the history of the free press, important as it is to that struggle. A detailed study of this crisis can illustrate what sort of a newspaper Nathaniel Mist was publishing, but also how newspapers in general fed off and interacted with a wider print culture. It can also act as a demonstration of a model that shows the links between news, political action and theory, and a wider print culture.

This chapter examines the production, publication, and prosecution of the Libel. It seeks to place the libel in its many contexts: the rhetoric of Jacobitism, print knowledge of Persia, the nature of libelling in the early eighteenth century, the use of innuendo in libelling, and the methodology of continued government regulation of the press at a time Britain was said to enjoy the most liberal press in Europe. The Persian Libel thus exemplifies the many ways in which politics and print culture could interact in the early

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[1] [?] – Peter, Lord King, 26 August 1728, London, The National Archives (T.N.A.), SP 36/8, f. 75.

eighteenth century, beyond a simple model of party propaganda and government reaction.

The matter of the Persian Libel

Regular readers of *Mist's Weekly Journal* would have seen little odd in the appearance of their paper on 24 August 1728. However, it was an extraordinary issue, possibly the best selling and most widely read issue of any of Mist's newspapers. Mist's men printed 10,000 copies.[2] Not only did they all sell, but it was claimed that 'such was the demand for them that the Printed Journals being all bought up several Copys were taken in writing & sold for half a Guinea apiece'.[3] The attraction was not that day's news; there had been no especially exciting crime, no particularly salacious gossip. What was there was a letter signed 'Amos Dudge', purporting to tell the story of the usurpation of the rightful Persian emperor, and the unhappiness that had befallen that country since the demise of legitimate government.[4]

Dudge's letter announced itself as 'a perfect Relation of the present State of Affairs in *Persia*' and, in brief, relates the misgovernment of that

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[2] While circulation figures are notoriously difficult to estimate for this period, in 1710, for six issues of the official newspaper, the *London Gazette*, 8,500 copies were printed – 'of these, 1,087 were given away ... 5,400 were sold, and the remaining 2,000 were left on the printer's hands', L. Hanson, Government and the press, 1695-1763 (Oxford, 1936), p. 85. Hanson also suggests circulation figures for Steele's Englishman (less than 900 in July and August 1715); The London Journal ('certainly not more than 15,000 and and probably not more than 10,000'); and the Craftsman (printed no more than 4,500 copies in the late 1730s 'when it was still a popular paper, if a little past its prime').

[3] Wharton – Stuart, 18 September 1728, Windsor, Royal Archives (R.A.), Stuart Papers 120/85.

[4] Mist's Weekly Journal, 24 August 1728.

country by Esreff, the son of the late usurper Meryweis. Esreff is illegitimate, a secret known only by his father's concubine and the Chief Scribe, who uses his knowledge of the ruler's bastardy to maintain his hold on power and thus 'to be *screened* by *Esreff*'s Authority, from the Cries of the People, who were groaning under the Load of his Depredations'. Esreff's character is compared unfavourably to the rightful monarch, the Young Sophi (although, to be fair, the Young Sophi appears as such a paragon that few saints would bear the comparison). The letter ends by predicting happier days under a restoration, a likely prospect given the support of the Ottoman Empire, the 'Great Turk' having come under the influence of a wise and humane Grand Mufti, and the Russian Czar.[5]

The Russian Czar is the only person in the letter who appears as himself. For the rest, the reader has to supply his own key. Esreff is, of course, George II, heir to the usurping George I. The possessors of the secret of Esreff's illegitimacy, the concubine and Chief Scribe, are the Duchess of Kendal, George I's mistress, and Sir Robert Walpole. (The reference to the Chief Scribe being 'skreened' by Esreff is a nod to Walpole's nickname of 'Skreenmaster-General', earned by the manner in which he defended George I and other members of the royal household from public opprobrium in the aftermath of the South Sea bubble.) The Young Sophi is James Francis Edward Stuart, his supporters in the Ottoman Empire (i.e. France), the Great

[5] Mist's Weekly Journal, 24 August 1728.

Turk and the Grand Mufti being, respectively, Louis XV and his first minister, Cardinal Fleury.[6]

Once the reader decodes the innuendo and the true identities of the protagonists are understood (and of course, one can not be certain that every reader would have been in a position to have done so, either lacking the relevant knowledge or sufficient wit), the Jacobite message is clear. There are two aspects of the libel that are of particular note to those interested in Jacobite rhetoric.

The first is the reversal of the warming pan myth. During the upheavals of the Glorious Revolution in 1688, it had often been put about in whig propaganda that James Francis Edward, the child born to Mary of Modena and declared to the world as James II's heir and Prince of Wales, was a 'changeling', an illegitimate child (and thus an illegitimate heir) smuggled into the queen's chamber in a warming pan. In the world of the Persian Libel, it is George II, not 'James III', who 'would fain pass for the Son of his Predecessor'.[7] Indeed, letters to the Stuart court suggest that Wharton himself wished to extend further this aspect of the Libel, the exiled duke proposing that he go on to produce a fake will for George I that would further dismay the 'wretches that tamely pay obedience to the spurious offspring of that polluted

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[6] Although this is fairly obvious, a carefully outlined key to the Libel can be found in documents relating to the government's prosecution of the libel, e.g. the charges in the case Rex vs. Eliza Nutt, T.N.A., Treasury Solicitor and H.M. Procuarator General Papers, TS 11/157.

[7] Mist's Weekly Journal, 24 August 1728. For the varieties of warming pan myth, see R.J. Weil, 'The politics of legitimacy: women and the warming-pan scandal', in L.G. Schwoerer (ed.), The revolution of 1688-89: changing perspectives (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 65-82.

bed'.[8] This novel extension of the Jacobite critique of Hanoverian legitimacy is conjoined in the Libel to a far more traditional theme: the hagiographic treatment of the Pretender:

> The *Sophi*, in his Person and Deportment, resembles his Father and Uncle, whose Picture I have seen. He is a Prince whose gracious Behaviour is sufficient to win, his Majesty to awe, and his Courage to face, the most inveterate of his Enemies. His Sufferings have added Experience and Patience to those endearing Qualities, in order to compleat the greatest Character that ever Eastern Monarch bore: The Misfortunes of his Subjects grieve him more than his own; such his publick Spirit! The Prince has no *Seraglio*, but has taken to his arms one Princess, whose Royal Virtues are fit to warm the Breast where dwells so great a Heart.[9]

This encomium takes its place with other similar pleadings from British propagandists that the British public should recognise the inherently majestic nature of their rightful king. 'Those who have conversed with him, allow him to be endu'd with an excellent Wit, and those who have seen him under the Trials of it, are of the same Opinion as to his Courage', reported one anonymous pamphlet.[10] The Jacobite stalwart Charles Leslie had praised his noble appearance as being 'Tall, Streight and clean Limb'd, Slender ... a very graceful Mien, [he] walks fast, and his Gate has great Resemblance of his Unkle King *Charles* II. and the Lines of his Face grow dayly more and more like him'.[11] Thus the libel, in its treatment of the Young Sophi / Old Pretender, works on recurrent Jacobite themes. In the case of the heroic person of the

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[8] [Wharton] – [?], 21 September 1728, R.A., Stuart Papers, 120/105. Mist was supposed to have the will published in both English and French, although the scheme appears to have collapsed, with no subsequent references to it in correspondence.

[9] Mist's Weekly Journal, 24 August 1728. Perhaps wisely, the Libel finds no room for an analogy for the Pretender's marital problems.

[10] Anon., Memoirs of the chevalier de St. George (London, 1712), pp. 43-5.

[11] C. Leslie, A letter from Mr Lesly to a member of parliament in London (London, 1714), p. 1.

Stuart Pretender, it does so in an entirely orthodox manner. However, on the other Jacobite theme of the warming pan myth, the libel is most unorthodox: unlike the propagandists of the reign of Queen Anne, the circumstances of James's birth are not brought up in order to be discounted as so much whig tittle-tattle, easily disproved by the testimony of eye-witnesses, but instead used as a weapon against those who would deny him any right to the throne. In Amos Dudge's letter, libel was countered by libel.

The nature of the Persian Libel

Libel is both a literary form and a legal concern. On the one hand, it is the matter conveyed – the details of the libel, the person or institution attacked, the charges levelled – and on the other hand it is the means of conveyance – for, as is commonly known, libel comes from the Latin for small book, 'libellus'. Somewhere between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the concept of what libel was and what it was to libel someone fundamentally altered. Libels ceased to be essentially a verse form – and a rather plebeian one at that – and became instead what is still today understood by libel, the dissemination in print (and, generally speaking, in prose) of false or defamatory news. However, in both cases, it remained the case that libel formed a part of a news culture as a means of communication of political knowledge, albeit one that was illegitimate and disrespectable.

Much work has been done on the role of libel in early modern England, particularly the England of the early Stuarts.[12] This has cast them in a dual role, as both reflections of popular opinion on the politics and politicians of the day and also as elemental in shaping that opinion. They were 'an important part of a broader, vibrant "news culture" – a web of practices and media – that spread political information and comment widely, if unevenly, through seventeenth-century society'.[13] A useful distinction that can be made between news and libel as distinct forms of political information disseminated through various media (i.e. oral, manuscript, or print) is that 'whereas news claimed attention for its purported truth value, the libel was by nature excessive, proffering illicit truths but simultaneously stretching into satire's realm of manifest fiction'.[14] This distinction, relating to truthfulness, is a particularly important one that can equally be applied to the news culture of the early eighteenth century. It has already been noted how the great store set on truthfulness by the newspapers of the day was a means by which to judge the relative merits of a paper and the demerits of its rivals.[15] While not truthful in

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[12] A. Bellany, '"Raylinge rymes and vaunting verse": libellous politics in early Stuart England', in K. Sharpe & P. Lake (eds), Culture and politics in early Stuart England (London, 1994), pp. 285-310; A. Bellany, 'Libels in action: ritual, subversion and the English literary underground', in T. Harris (ed.), The politics of the excluded, *c.*1500-1850 (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 99-124; T. Cogswell, 'Underground verse and the transformation of early Stuart political culture', Huntington Library Quarterly 60 (1998), pp. 303-26; P. Croft, 'Libels, popular literacy and public opinion in early modern England', Historical Research 68 (1995), pp. 302-17; A. Fox, 'Ballads, libels and popular ridicule in Jacobean England', Past and Present 145 (1994), pp. 47-83; A. McRae, 'The literary culture of early Stuart libelling', Modern Philology 97 (2000), pp. 364-92; A. McRae, Literature, satire, and the early Stuart state (2004), pp. 23-82.

[13] Bellany, 'Libels in action', p. 100.

[14] McRae, 'Literary culture of early Stuart libelling', p. 367.

[15] Chapter 3, above.

the same way as the newspaper's reporting was, the Persian Libel had pretensions to truthfulness, and is not entirely fictional, the central premise of its explicit content – the contemporary revolution in Persia – being a matter of public knowledge.

For the most part, approaches to libel in the eighteenth century have been dominated by a political and legal contextualisation. The law of libel in the eighteenth century, particularly in regard to its relationship to the freedom of the press, has been exceedingly well excavated.[16] It is within this scholarly tradition that, when it has received any notice at all, the Persian Libel has been placed.[17] In contrast, there has been only limited study of libel in the early eighteenth century as a literary genre, rather than a legal or political problem. One reason for this may be that many of the aspects of early modern libel that interest cultural historians and historically-minded literary critics have been studied through examinations of eighteenth-century satire, shifting attention away from anonymous and ephemeral forms of literary subversion to the more

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[16] P. Hamburger, 'The development of the law of seditious libel', Stanford Law Review 37 (1985); Hanson, Government and the press, pp. 7-35; P.B.J. Hyland, 'Liberty and libel: government and the press during the succession crisis in Britain, 1712-1716', English Historical Review 101 (1986), pp. 863-88; C.R. Kropf, 'Libel and satire in the eighteenth century', in W. Weiss (ed.), Die Englische Satire (Darmstadt, 1982), pp. 336-9; C. Manchester, 'A history of the crime of obscene libel', Journal of Legal History 12:1 (1991), pp. 36-57.

[17] Sometimes, even when discussing how Mist 'easily holds the record for chages of seditious libel in the early eighteenth century', the Persian Libel itself can pass without mention: G.C. Gibbs, 'Government and the English press, 1695 to the middle of the eighteenth century', in A.C. Duke & C.A. Tamse (eds), Too mighty to be free: censorship and the press in Britain and the Netherlands (Zutphen, 1987), pp. 95-6.

respected and respectable figures of the recognised canon of British satire – Dryden, Pope, Swift, Gay, *et al.*[18]

However, it is possible to place the Persian Libel in the wider context of a popular print culture in the early eighteenth century as well as the more traditional – and more narrowly conceived – story of the emancipation of the press from political and legal constraints. One way to do so is to examine the scandalous nature of libels.[19] The Duke of Wharton himself embraced the scandalous nature of his libel and was happy to boast of his achievements to the Pretender, no doubt with one eye on his pocket-book, as the Stuart court was an important source of income for the impecunious duke. 'Never any Paper', he boasted, 'has made more noise ... the Baron Borke a Prussian Officer lately arrived from England has assur'd us that the Duchess of Hanover even cryed for Rage & that Walpole had expresst the utmost fury & resentment'.[20] Borke's testimony, Wharton commented, showed 'the whole world the mean opinion even Germans entertain of the present usurper'.[21] The Persian Libel was in part designed to illustrate the divide between the ruling elite and the political nation as represented by the audience for newspapers.

These emotional responses are not confirmed by the official correspondence regarding the affair, although it does confirm that the severity

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[18] C. Rawson, Satire and sentiment, 1669-1830 (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 29-97; M. Seidel, 'Satire, lampoon, libel, slander', in S.N. Zwicker (ed.), The Cambridge companion to English literature 1650-1740 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 33-57.

[19] A. Bellany, The politics of court scandal in early modern England: news culture and the Overbury affair, 1603-1660 (Cambridge, 2002); K. Temple, Scandal nation: law and authorship in Britain, 1750-1832 (Ithaca, New York, & London, 2003).

[20] Wharton – Stuart, 18 September 1728, R.A., Stuart Papers 120/85.

[21] Wharton – [?], 18 September 1728, Stuart Papers 120/87.

with which the Libel was punished was on the orders of the highest authority, the Attorney General receiving his instructions directly from Hampton Court:

> I have acquainted the King with what past in Conversation between us last Saturday, concerning Mist's Journal of that Day: His Maj:ty thinks, it highly imports the honour of the Government, and the Welfare of his Subjects, that the Author, Printer & Publisher of this Treasonable, Scandalous, and Seditious Libel should be punisht with the utmost Severity of Law ... The King is so fully persuaded of your zeal for this Service, that he doubts not of employing your utmost skill, application & care in the carrying on this prosecution; of which I have assured His Maj:ty, in the most particular manner, as from you.[22]

Elsewhere, the Lord Chancellor was sent a copy of the newspaper, with a warning that 'I am sure yr Ldsp cannot read [it] without the highest Indignation to see Treason and Insolence carryed, in this paper, beyond any Instance that perhaps has ever been known of the like nature'.[23] The Grand Jury of Middlesex issued a presentment condemning the Libel not only for its Jacobitical assertion that the parliamentary settlement of the throne in the favour of the House of Hanover was 'an illegal Usurpation', but also for its personal attacks on the court:

> In which Paper are also contained under the like feigned Names & Representations the most false, Malicious and Scurrilous Reflections, tending to Scandalize & Vilify His Most Excellent Majty's Sacred Person, Family and Government, to poison the Minds of His Loyal & Faithfull Subjects with Jealousies & Distrusts concerning His wise & gentle Administration and to Alienate from His Majty the Allegiance & Affectations of His People; Together with the highest and most Groundless Reproaches upon the Person & Memory of Our late most Gracious Sovereign King George the First of Glorious Memory.[24]

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[22] [?] – Yorke, 25 August 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 71.
[23] [?] – Peter, Lord King, 26 August 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 75.
[24] A Presentm[en]t of the Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex, London, London Metropolitan Archives (L.M.A.), MJ/SP/1728/08/004. The presentment was ordered to 'be forthwith printed and published in one or more of the publick news papers', Draft of order for printing a presentment of the Grand

The initial reception of the letter in Grub Street also concentrated on the personal, scandalous nature of the attack. The government press leapt to the defence of the honour of their king and queen. In the *British Journal*, 'W.A.' – who believed Dudge's letter to be an invective that 'for *Temerity*, *Insolence*, and *Enthusiasm*, exceeds *all* that ever I beheld since these Eyes were open to the Light' – rebutted 'this *scandalous* Libel on the *People* of *England*' on personal grounds. Not only was the (un-named) author of the letter revealed to be one 'who appear'd in Arms against his Country; who, for *repeated* Acts of Disloyalty and Treason, is *infamous* amongst us', but the scandal was greater on the other side.[25]

Perhaps inevitably, the *British Journal* pointed out that attacks on the king's legitimacy or claims for the marital bliss of the Stuart pretender were not the strongest foundations upon which to build a Jacobite argument. W.A. was 'amaz'd with the *Impotence* of their *Malice*, in their *poor* and *foolish* Attempt to *undermine* a *Royal Title*, by ridiculous, incredible and nonsensical Stories of *illegitimate Birth*'. Was not the Pretender 'under *notorious* Imputations *himself*'? Furthermore, the real scandal in this affair was not to be attached to the House of Hanover, but rather to the Stuart court, where the sufferings of the Pretender's wife were common knowledge:

> It grieves me to think of the *Princess* unfortunately destin'd to his *Bed*; and my tenderness to her *lovely Sex* makes me *mourn* her unhappy *Fate*, who was *forc'd* to *abandon* his Embraces, and *fly*

Jury, August 1728, L.M.A., MJ/SP/1728/08/003. It subsequently appeared in a pro-ministry journal, The Weekly Journal; or, British Gazetteer, 7 September 1728.

[25] British Journal, 31 August 1728.

> from his Arms, by *Injuries* which would have *soften'd* any Heart but *his*.[26]

Similarly, in the *London Journal*, 'Philalethes' attacked what he saw as 'the most profane Violation of Majesty itself' and 'the utmost Licentiousness' of *Mist's Weekly Journal*, claiming that such personal attacks only achieved the opposite of the libellers' intentions:

> But in the present Case, when the Prince himself, — a Prince of a steady and clear Judgement, of a manly and heroick Fortitude, of a generous and benevolent Nature, and with all the happy Talents that form the Mind for Government; — and when the Queen, — a Princess, whose Accomplishments are as much exalted above Praise, as the merit the highest Applause; and whose uncommon Knowledge and exalted Genius are the Admiration of the World about us:— When such excellent Personages, I say, are treated by the malicious Sport of Writers in a Manner the most false and vilifying, as well as the most bold and audacious, it rouses the general Attention; and the Heart of every Man, who lives under the happy Influence of the present Reign, feels the warmest Resentment, as in this he suffers the greatest injury.[27]

This last assertion of Philalethes is of importance in this case. It was generally understood that maintaining the good reputation of the court in the press was of the greatest importance. That, indeed, was the point of Lord Chief Justice Holt's judgement in the libel case concerning Tutchin and his *Observator* in 1704, when that judge argued that 'if people should not be called to account for possessing the people with an ill opinion of the government, no government can subsist. For it is very necessary for all governments that the people should have a good opinion of it'.[28] Philalethes made the point again in his rejection of the Libel: 'There are certainly few Crimes which more concern

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[26] British Journal, 31 August 1728.
[27] London Journal, 7 September 1728.
[28] E.N. Williams, The eighteenth-century constitution 1688-1815: documents and commentary (Cambridge, 1960), p. 402.

every Government to put a stop to, than the Licence of Libellers in general: The good Name of private Persons, the Honour of Families, and the Glory of Nations, hang by a very slender Thread, wherever this satyrical Vein lies under no Restraint'.[29]

It was this acceptance of the Hanoverian regime, residing in public opinion, which the Libel was attempting to unsettle. The Persian Libel did indeed set out to give the people – or at least that part of the people that read *Mist's Weekly Journal* – an 'ill opinion of the government'. Whereas it was Mist's intention to exploit the tension between a court and ministry not entirely beloved by the public, the whig newspapers emphasised that no such division existed. Instead, the nation was united as one in 'Universal Resentment' of the Libel's imputations.[30] Initial reactions to the Libel were not then solely based upon the relative merits of the Jacobites' political argument over the rights of the Pretender to the British throne. Instead, the politics of the Libel were personalised – the debate centred on the moral and physical fitness to govern of the rival claimants – and put before the public to judge. However, questions remain to be answered about the nature of the Persian Libel, not least ones of genre and context: why was the Libel Persian?

The writing of the Persian Libel

Unlike so many letters to the *Weekly Journal*, the authorship of the Persian Libel is well known: Amos Dudge was a pseudonym for Philip, first

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[29] London Journal, 14 September 1728.
[30] London Journal, 7 September 1728.

Duke of Wharton.[31] He was the son of Thomas Wharton, the first Marquess of Wharton, and was raised to be not only the heir to his father's estates, but also to his impeccably, definitively whig politics.[32] This was a fate rejected by the son, although he did somewhat implausibly claim that his Jacobite activities were compatible with his father's political principles and that he was a 'Jacobite whig'.[33] While Wharton's commitment to Jacobitism was never constant, or ever primarily governed by a disinterested belief in the legitimacy of the Stuart claim, it was wholehearted enough when it suited his purposes to believe in it. On other occasions, he was able to accommodate himself to living under a Hanoverian regime. In Wharton's personal history, the Persian Libel represents his final break with any hope of reconciliation with the German dynasty, a dynasty that had sought to reward him by raising his title from a marquisate to a dukedom.

Wharton was no stranger to the world of print politics. In the wake of the discovery of the Atterbury Plot – when Francis Atterbury, the Bishop of Rochester was revealed to be conspiring for a Stuart revival backed by foreign arms – Wharton that had been one of the bishop's leading defenders. This

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[31] The Duke of Wharton, for all his idiosyncrasies, has not been of great interest to historians. The best source of information is undoubtedly his entry in the 'new DNB', L.B. Smith, 'Wharton, Philip James, duke of Wharton and Jacobite duke of Northumberland (1698–1731)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 2004). See also L. Melville, The life and writings of Philip Duke of Wharton (London, 1913) and E. Cruickshanks, 'Lord Cowper, Lord Orrery, the Duke of Wharton and Jacobitism', Albion 26 (1994), pp. 27-40. He is also the protagonist of an astonishingly bad historical novel, A.P. Brotherhead, Himself his worst enemy (Philadelphia, 1871).

[32] Smith, 'Wharton, Philip James'. For the father, see C.A. Robbins, The Earl of Wharton and whig party politics 1679-1715 (Lampeter, 1992) and J.K. Clark, Whig's progress: Tom Wharton between revolutions (London, 2004).

[33] For the contemporary use of this phrase, see Chapter 3, above.

defence was carried on both high and low, not only from his place in the House of Lords, but also from Grub Street, in his Spectatorial essay-sheet *The True Briton*.[34] For this service, he was often the subject of laudatory coverage in Mist's newspaper. Wharton was a gifted writer, and while the *True Briton* worked on predictable enough themes of political virtue and corruption, he was also capable of producing imaginative works of satire and pastiche.[35] The Persian Libel was as a piece with his previous literary productions, combining his oppositional politics and his taste for scandal.

It is too easy to see the Persian Libel as a fantasy, a 'fairy tale' story, a piece of fiction that bears no connection to events. However, the Libel is based on real people and real events, all of which were conscientiously reported in the pages of the *Weekly Journal.* Regular readers of Mist's newspaper would have been very familiar with the cast of the Libel, with Meryweis and Esreff, and the usurped Sophi. They would also have been familiar with the events of the revolution in Persia, and with the newspaper's choice to make an implicit analogue between the British and Persian

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[34] [P. Wharton], The True Briton (2 vols, London, 1723-24). The journal lasted 74 issues, ceasing on the prosecution of its printer for seditious libel; Wharton's authorship was not made public knowledge. For the Atterbury plot, see G.V. Bennett, The tory crisis in church and state 1688-1730: the career of Francis Atterbury Bishop of Rochester (Oxford, 1975) and E. Cruickshanks & H. Erskine-Hill, The Atterbury plot (Basingstoke, 2004). Both works ignore Wharton's Grub Street activities, concentrating instead on his parliamentary and conspiratorial manœuvrings.

[35] For one unpublished instance see 'By the Duke of Wharton Votes of the House of Commons at York Die Veneris Jan: 1723', a satirical 'debate' featuring elite men and women and possibly the record of a convivial meeting: 'Mr Loyd from the Committee appointed to consider the most effectuall means to amend the Duke of Whartons ways reported yt he had taken the same into consideration but judg'd it impracticable', British Library (B.L.), Stowe 970, ff. 76-8.

revolutions. This period also saw other publications on Persia, both factual and fictional.[36] Most notably, 1721 had seen the first appearance in English translation of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*.[37]

Thus the Persian Libel can be understood as having close links with the print culture of the day, building on print knowledge of Persia and in particular the detailed coverage of Persian affairs that was a hallmark of the newspaper, albeit one that has gone uncommented upon. This lent verisimilitude to the Libel, blurring the distinction between its status as libel and the truthfulness of news reporting. In any case, it would not have appeared to the regular reader of the newspaper as something that had appeared from nowhere, but that instead formed a part of the newspaper's continued coverage of events in Persia.

Early appearances of Persia in the news columns of the *Weekly Journal* seem to confirm received opinion of both the purpose of news reporting in the

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[36] e.g. Anon., The Persian Cromwell: being an account of the life and suprizing achievements and successes of Miri-Ways, Great Duke of Candahar, and Protector of the Persian Empire (London, 1724); J. Chardin, A new and accurate description of Persia and other eastern nations (2 vols, London, 1724); T. Krusinski, The history of the revolution in Persia (2 vols, London, 1728).

[37] In the pages of Mist's newspaper too. Montesquieu's Lettres persanes had first appeared in Paris in the spring or summer of 1721. In September of that year, 'Atticus' writes to the newspaper with a translation of one of the letters, praising Montesquieu's 'Good Sense, true Humour, sound Judgement, and solid learning', Weekly Journal; or, Saturday's Post, 16 September 1721. 'The Translator' provides another translated letter the following week, Weekly Journal, 23 September 1721. Both translations appear earlier than – and are different to – John Ozell's first complete English translation, Letters between two Persian noblemen at Paris, and their friends at Ispahan (2 vols, London, 1721), which is first advertised for sale in the newspapers dated 7 October 1721. Further Persian letters – though not ones written by Montesquieu – appear in the newspaper the following year: Weekly Journal, 1 December 1722; 8 December 1722; and 15 December 1722.

early eighteenth century and the reception of 'the East'.[38] One report on the arrival in Paris of an embassy from Persia conforms to the expectation that foreign news reporting was generally suborned to the interests of commercial activity, providing the enquiring businessman with news suitable for the more profitable conduct of his trade:

> A new Embassy from Persia is arrived in that Country [i.e. France], in order to renew and conclude a Treaty of Commerce ... They write, that by virtue of a Proposal now on foot, the French Merchants in Persia will have such Privileges and such Advantages, that the Trade to India shall be carried on with infinitely more Advantage than ever it has been done before, all the Commodities of India and China being admitted to the Persian Gulph, and landed and exported by the French Merchants, free of any Import; so that the Caravans to Aleppo and Scanderoon shall soon be doubled, and the Trade shall centre at Marseilles as cheap as it can possibly be brought round about the Cape of Good Hope by Sea, and with less Hazard of miscarrying by the Way.[39]

While this carries information that might be of interest to those concerned in the success of the East India Company's trade around the Cape of Good Hope, it should be remembered that British trading interests to Persia were not especially developed at this juncture, nor was the region of great

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[38] Michael Harris makes the point that commerce, as well as politics, are the 'dominant interests' of foreign news reporting, M. Harris, London newspapers in the age of Walpole: a study of the origins of the modern English press (Rutherford, New Jersey, 1987), p. 166. In an extremely influential work, Edward Said argued that western knowledge of the Islamic world shaped (and was shaped by) a discourse of the superiority of western civilization. The Orient was the West's 'Other', a fabricated construct against which western self-identity and modernity could be developed. See E.W. Said, Orientalism (London, 1978). This theoretical framework has also been employed by some historians to account for the shaping of a British national identity against a French 'Other', L. Colley, 'Britishness and otherness: an argument', Journal of British Studies 31 (1992), pp. 309-29. Said's polemic is not without its detractors, most recently R. Irwin, For lust of knowing: the orientalists and their enemies (London, 2006).

[39] Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, 4 July 1719.

strategic significance for British military or imperial policy.[40] Other early reports of Persia stress the oddity and otherness of the Islamic world, such as when a report from Constantinople informed readers 'that an Ambassador is arriv'd there from Persia with a magnificent Train, only to compliment the Sultan upon the Circumcision of his Son'.[41] However, over the next six years reporting of Persia was to take on a quite different meaning for readers of the newspaper, as Mist set about reporting in close detail the fall of the Safavid regime.

Of course it can be argued that knowledge of a foreign revolution can be ascribed to curiosity or the interests of those trading with those parts of the world and the difficulties such ruptures may present to commerce. However, other purposes may be served. We have already seen how news of political ruptures in Europe were translated into the English political vernacular of tory and whig.[42] The same tin ear for regional peculiarities and specificities, for variation, that made politics in France, the Empire, or Poland, into so many echoes of British domestic politics also transformed the nature of the Persian revolution from something different to something familiar.

Initial reports of the convulsions in the Persian empire were straightforward enough. News that 'the People on the Coasts of the Caspian Sea, have made an Irruption into that Kingdom with twenty thousand Men'

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[40] The East India Company had arrived in Persia in 1615, evicting the Portuguese in 1622 – however, it was the Dutch who were the most important European presence at this point, D. Morgan, Medieval Persia 1040-1797 (London, 1988), p. 139. Most accounts of Anglo-Iranian links concentrate on the latter half of the eighteenth century. A.A. Amin, British interests in the Persian Gulf (Leiden, 1967), pp. 1-23, summarises the position before 1747.
[41] Weekly Journal, 17 February 1722.
[42] Chapter 2, above.

were soon confirmed and soon more detailed accounts of the 'consternation' appeared:

> By the last Mail arrived from Holland we have an Account of a most surprizing Revolution in Persia; Miriveis and Sheich Mahmud, two Rebels, abetted and supported by the Great Mogul, have caused a great Revolt in the Persian State. The former of these, who is the most potent, not only made himself Master of the whole Country from Candahar to Ispahan, but having defeated the Sophi, or Emperor of Persia's Army, he laid Siege to that Metropolis, forc'd the Castle, and put the City under Contribution ... the Sophi has found it a very difficult Matter to make his Escape, accompanied by three or four of his Court only, and he is now upon the Frontiers of Turkey, and has implored the Protection of the Sultan: But it is not yet known what the Council have resolved to do in this Case.[43]

A few weeks later, consternation about the upheavals in Persia had spread to the Ottoman capital in Constantinople, and it was expected that an army would be sent 'to put a Check to the Usurper's Progress'.[44] It is the appearance of the word 'Usurper' that provides the hint to how the *Weekly Journal* would understand the revolution and report it to its readers. It was to be another Glorious Revolution, proceeding from similar causes and would have similar implications for order in the region. The 'rebel' and 'usurper' in question, Mereweis, 'seems to have copied from European Policy, and aims at Sovereignty under the specious Colour of Reformation'. If this hint was not strong enough, the report went on:

> He declares every where as he goes, that he does not pretend to the Crown, but only to bring the King over to the true Religion; and that whenever his Prince will renounce his Heresy, and embrace the true Mahometan Faith, he will lay down his Arms, and pay due Obedience to him. This Pretence has been so successful to the Rebel, that People flock to him from all Parts of the Kingdom.[45]

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[43] Weekly Journal, 17 February 1722; Weekly Journal, 23 June 1722.
[44] Weekly Journal, 30 July 1722.
[45] Weekly Journal, 7 July 1722.

It is not too difficult to imagine that the newspaper's readers would recall the Declaration of William III when he launched his intervention in British politics, when the Prince of Orange announced that he had 'no other design' than for a re-establishment of the constitutional norms that James II's 'evil counsellors' had subverted and made no mention of any ambition to the Crown of England.[46] The religious motivations add a further parallel.[47] It is, of course, not a perfect fit: William III did not desire James II to convert to the Church of England (although perhaps some tories may have). However, one of the essential Jacobite criticisms of William III has been transposed upon his Persian counterpart: that of advancing his cause under false pretences. The rebellion was also presented as justifying itself as a resistance against tyranny, supported by a nobility alienated from the monarch:

> They talk now that the Rebel Miriveis has sent a Letter to the Grand Seignior, wherein he makes a second Nero of the Sophi of Persia, and says his eldest Son is no less cruel and barbarous. That the Grandees of that Empire have therefore declared against his succeeding to the Throne, and express'd a Readiness to sacrifice their Lives and Fortunes in Favour of his younger Brother, several of them were put to Death by the Sophi's Order. That this occasion'd a general Discontent, and at last a Resolution to depose the Sophi, and advance his younger Son to the Throne.[48]

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[46] Williams, The eighteenth-century constitution, pp. 10-16; T. Claydon, 'William III's "Declaration of Reasons" and the Glorious Revolution', Historical Journal 39 (1996), pp. 87-108.

[47] One to which Mist's newspapers would only occasionally return, such as when it was reported that in return for Turkish support Mereweis 'promises to establish the Doctrine of *Mahomet* throughout Persia; the present Persians being of the Sect of *Ali*, and therefore looked upon by the others as Schismaticks; that this has made the Mufti a great Stickler for his Interest ... and thus they are resolved to play the Devil for the Sake of their Prophet Mahomet', Weekly Journal, 28 December 1723. The theme of usurpation was a far more common point of reference than religious divide.

[48] Weekly Journal, 17 November 1722.

This Anglicisation of the upheavals in Persia is most blatant in two reports, one of which asserted that 'the Persians will be obliged to abjure the Family of the old Sophi, and to exclude them from all Right to the Dominions of their Ancestors' – making obvious reference to the controversy surrounding the Abjuration Oath in the 1690s and afterwards.[49] The other, purporting to represent debates in Constantinople, noted that 'more ingenuous' politicians 'were pleased to urge, that the Sophi of Persia being dethroned and dead, the Throne is become vacant'.[50] These last words would be familiar to any Englishman, being as they were the very formula that the Convention of 1689 used in the debates following James II's sudden absence from the centre of sovereignty and to justify William III's accession, that James had abdicated 'and that the Throne is thereby vacant'.[51] The main aim of these news reports then was not to relay accurate representations of events in faraway countries – although it is of course possible that readers may have read them as such – but to emphasise the analogue between the Glorious Revolution and the fall of the Safavids. They allowed space for reflections in Mist's newspapers upon certain issues that may have otherwise resulted in the severe displeasure of the British Government.

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[49] Weekly Journal, 28 December 1723. For the Abjuration Oath, see J. Hoppit, A land of liberty? England 1689-1727 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 153-4.
[50] Weekly Journal, 23 November 1723.
[51] Journals of the House of Lords (London, 1767-), vol. XIV, p. 118. See also Williams, Eighteenth-century constitution, pp. 20-6; T.P. Slaughter, '"Abdicate and "Contract" in the Glorious Revolution', Historical Journal 24 (1981), pp. 323-37; J. Miller, 'The Glorious Revolution: "Contract" and "Abdication" reconsidered', Historical Journal 25 (1982), pp. 541-55; T.P. Slaughter, '"Abdicate" and "Contract" restored', Historical Journal 28 (1985), pp. 399-403.

Mist's newspapers made little attempt at the objective style in their reporting of events. In an essay on the subject, Mist declared that he devoted so much space to Persian matters, in contrast to his rivals, because of a particular animus he held – 'nor shall the Rebel *Miriweis* form any Attempt against the *Sophi* of *Persia*, but I will give publick Notice of it, for I hate *Traytors*'.[52] When the empires of the Ottoman Turks and the Russians had become embroiled in what had turned into a regional power struggle, Mr Mist was unafraid of picking sides. A rupture between Constantinople and St Petersburg forced the Turks to support the rebels in return for territorial gain. Mist's newspaper, in a spirit of betrayal, wrote bitterly of an Ottoman Emperor 'who is not ashamed of joining with an Usurper for Interest'.[53]

The Czar, Peter the Great, was treated somewhat differently. The *Weekly Journal* printed in full a translation of the Czar's declaration explaining the motivations behind his involvement in Persia. The Czar, it reported with great certainty, had no interest in territorial gain, as he himself had declared that he was without 'any Design of reducing any Province of that Kingdom under his own Obedience'. Instead, the Russian forces marching into Persia were for 'restoring and establishing the lawful Prince upon his Throne, and defending the People against the Tyranny of the Rebel'.[54] This was the same sort of reasoning that the *Weekly Journal* had dismissed as so much cant when used by Mereweis or William III. It was similarly self-serving: Russia did of course have an interest in expanding her territory at the expense of Persia

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[52] Weekly Journal, 6 October 1722.
[53] Weekly Journal, 12 January 1723.
[54] Weekly Journal, 15 December 1722.

and the Ottoman Porte. This went unremarked, the *Weekly Journal* temporarily deserted by its characteristic cynicism.[55]

The extent of this coverage of Persian affairs, the highly charged interpretation of events, was unique to the *Weekly Journal*. Other newspapers covered the story, although for Mist's rivals, who did not share his Jacobitism, the story could not serve such an ideological purpose. The revolution in Persia allowed Mist to expound Jacobite doctrines of indefeasible hereditary right, and a Jacobite history of England since the Glorious Revolution, by exporting them to a country well removed from England. While he could not comment so freely on British affairs, he could use Persia as a space upon which to project the Jacobite interpretation of history. This transference was more or less transparent. At one point, Mist even referred to the subversion of the 'ancient Rights of Persia'. Appeals to 'the ancient rights of Englishmen' was an incantation that was a commonplace to the British opposition, but sounded ridiculous when applied to a country that was popularly considered to have the most despotic constitution imaginable.[56] Placed in the context of this

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[55] The Czar was portrayed as the defender of the rights of legitimate princes throughout Europe, 'his Majesty is inclined rather to embrace the Party of the abdicated Sophy, than that of an Usurper; they make this Conjecture from his Majesty's Behaviour towards the Dukes of Mecklenburg and Holstein, his Minister at Vienna having renewed his Instances in Favour of the former: and also having signified to the Danish Minister at Petersburg, that his Majesty expected the King of Denmark would restore the Dutchy of Sleswick to the latter', Weekly Journal, 26 January 1723. As such he was being wooed by the Jacobite interest, which goes some way to explain the newspaper's sudden naivety.

[56] Weekly Journal,17 February 1728. For example, the French traveller Jean Baptiste Tavernier classified Persian government as 'purely Despotick or Tyrannical ... nor is there any Soveraign in the world more absolute than the King of *Persia*', J.B. Tavernier, Collections of travels through Turky into Persia, and the East Indies (2 vols, London, 1684), I, p. 219. J.-P. Rubiés, 'Oriental

coverage, and the wider fashion for 'Persian Letters' after Montesquieu, it is easy to understand why Wharton chose Persia as the scene for his Libel: it already existed as a space upon which to project Jacobite fantasies. Now it is necessary to see how the Libel was transmitted to the public.

The printing and publishing of the Persian Libel

The clandestine activity involved in printing and re-printing the Libel suggests that Mist and his associates understood the public impact and legal implications that its publication would have; it also points to the way the affair was managed, the level of preparation involved, and how networks of printers could co-operate on Grub Street. Of course, once the Libel was printed, it was necessary to take it to market. The publication and dissemination of the Libel, reliant on hawkers and newspaper sellers, shows how such scandalous and apparently illegal material could be disseminated using standard market outlets as well as more clandestine activity.

At the time of the printing and publication of the Libel, Nathaniel Mist himself had already fled to France, as had the Duke of Wharton. In a joke article in the foreign news columns of the paper, it was announced that "Tis written from Rouen, That upon the late Turn of Affairs in England, his Grace the Duke of Wharton has set up a *School* in that City ... At the same place, Mr. Mist, lately Printer of this Paper, drives a Hackney-Coach. And, 'tis said, that

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despotism and European orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu', Journal of Early Modern History 9 (2005), pp. 109-80; F.G. Whelan, 'Oriental despotism: Anquetil-Duperron's response to Montesquieu', History of Political Thought 22 (2001), pp. 619-47.

all Three are in a fair Way of getting a decent Livelihood'.[57] Three weeks later, the joke was continued in a bulletin supposedly from Rouen:

> *By the Advice of several Gentlemen in England, a very good, convenient, and well situated School, is open'd in this City, for the Education of young Noblemen, where all the Grammar Rules, and the Idioms of the English Language, are taught in their greatest Purity ... Note, for the better Accommodation of the Scholars, a Hackney Coach is set up in the same Town by a noted* Driver, *who understands the use of the Whip, and will carry them to all the best Parts of the City, at reasonable Rates.*[58]

The newspaper had been continued despite the removal of Mist from the country, Mist's employees carrying on the printing of the paper from Carter Lane under the direction of one Bingley, though he too would disappear in the months leading up to the publication of the libel, frustrating an attempt by the ministry to arrest him.[59] Among those arrested for their alleged involvement in the printing of the Persian Libel were Mist's apprentices, Joseph Carter and William King, his two 'printer's devils', Thomas Randall and James Ford, and three workmen. Also arrested were the wife and brother of John Wolfe, Mist's journeyman printer (who had also absconded prior to the Libel), and Doctor Gaylard, Mist's former apprentice.[60]

However, while the remnants of Mist's household could produce the newspaper, given the size of the print run it was necessary to co-opt the resources of other printers. The Libel proved popular enough to justify printing another run of the issue the following Monday. This re-printing of the Libel

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[57] Mist's Weekly Journal, 27 July 1728.
[58] Mist's Weekly Journal, 17 August 1728.
[59] Watson – Delafaye, 11 March 1727/8, T.N.A., SP 36/5, f. 184; Watson – [Townshend], 12 March 1727/8, T.N.A., SP 36/5, f. 188; Watson – Delafaye, 14 March 1727/8, T.N.A., SP 36/5, f. 192.
[60] List of printers, etc, re prosecution of Mist's Weekly Journal, 20 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, ff. 166-7.

was produced at the house of William Burton, a printer in St John's Lane, although Burton himself always denied taking any part in the production of the Libel beyond allowing Mist's men the use of his press.[61] Burton, in a petition addressed to the Queen, pleaded that his own politics owed nothing to Jacobitism, he being one whose 'affection & duty to your Majesty's Government is well known to all his Neighbours'.[62] Edmund Curll, the notorious printer of questionable literature, supported Burton, writing that the politics of the Persian Libel were 'far distant from his Principles'.[63]

Burton's individual politics did not though get in the way of business; his lending of his press to another printer was 'as is always usual for one printer to another when they are not engaged'.[64] Co-operation in this manner was, in the normal course of events, not a matter of partisan politics. Perhaps the clandestine nature of the work should have alerted Burton to the fact that this was not the normal course of events, for as Samuel Duke, Burton's servant, recalled in a witness statement the arrival of Mist's men was somewhat mysterious:

> on Monday the 26th of Augt a Coach came to his Master's House out of wch he saw some Forms taken and there came at the same time (but whether in the Coach or not he cannot tell) Mist's two Apprentices and the two Boys commonly called Devils all belonging to Mist's printing House – That the Witness does not know that they were expected there & knew nothing of their coming till he saw them – That the sd Apprentices and Boys (whose names he knows not) brought the sd Forms and a Quantity of paper of abt forty Quire into Mr Burton's Press Room and there

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[61] Evidence in prosecution of Roe and Burton for printing the Mist libel, T.N.A., TS 11/424.
[62] Petition of William Burton, n.d., T.N.A., SP 36/16, f. 161. The petition was addressed to the Queen as George II was at that point absent in Hanover.
[63] Curll – Hutchins, 6 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 110.
[64] Petition of William Burton, n.d., T.N.A., SP 36/16, f. 161.

> went to work, in printing off the Forms they had brought thither and staid there working (from the Evening when they came) all the night of the sd Monday – That on Tuesday morning they went away & carried with them what remained of the papers they had printed for they had during the sd night from time to time sent away the rest by two or three Quire at a time, which papers were carried away by the Boys called Devils or one of them and by one of Mist's Journeymen named Clark who also help'd to work whilst one of the Apprentices carried off some of the sd papers.[65]

Curll, in his letter of support for Burton, wrote that while Burton had been inadvertently drawn into the scheme, other printers were also involved who were 'much more Objects of the Resentments of the Govt'. Curll named names, informing the ministry that 'Mr Richardson in Salisbury Court, & Mr Parker in Jewin Street are the Men. The former I am assur'd printed the Journal of last Saturday, and the Wife of the latter publish'd it'.[66] Neither Richardson or Parker were taken up by the government; Curll's allegations are the only indicator of their taking any part in the production of the Libel.[67] However, the secretive and clandestine nature of the production of the newspaper continued. A subsequent issue of the *Weekly Journal*, a double issue dated 7 & 14 September, written in defence of the Persian Libel, was

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[65] Evidence in prosecution of Roe and Burton for printing the Mist libel, T.N.A., TS 11/424.

[66] Curll – Hutchins, 6 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, ff. 110-11. The Richardson of Salisbury Court was Samuel Richardson, better remembered as a novelist. There are a number of links between Richardson and Mist. Richardson advertised in Mist's newspaper and was 'renter-warden' (i.e. steward) of the Stationer's Company in 1727 with Mist as his deputy. It has also been suggested that the character of Lovelace in Clarissa owes something to the Duke of Wharton – Richardson had also been connected to the True Briton. T.C.D. Eaves & B.D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: a biography (Oxford, 1971), pp. 20-36 gives a not entirely accurate account of the Libel and the links between Wharton, Mist, and Richardson.

[67] Curll had informed on seditious printers before in return for official help with 'a malicious Prosecution' that was being carried out against him, Curll – [Townshend?], 25 April 1722, T.N.A., SP 35/31, ff. 85-6; Curll – Delafaye, 20 October 1725, T.N.A. SP 35/58, f. 170.

itself declared a libel by the government. The printer of this issue, John Wilford, was taken up and examined about the role he played in its production:

> it was not printed by him but by his Order; that he know not who is ye Author of ye said Libel, that ye Copy was sent to him by an unknown person; that he took upon him ye publication of Mist's Journal to reserve ye Paper so intitled out of bad hands & intended by so doing to serve the Government, by carrying it on in an inoffensive way; that ye said Libel was published in ye usual manner by sending it on to ye Mercurys as they are called who make a Trade of selling News Papers and Pamphlets & retailing them out to the Hawkers; that as they were not delivered by himself he cannot give an Account of the particular persons.[68]

This 'usual manner' of publishing the paper can be illustrated by the dissemination of the Persian Libel. The alleged role of Parker's wife points to an important aspect of the publication history of the Persian Libel: the importance of the women of Grub Street to its publication. Many of the people taken up in the aftermath of the publication of the Libel were women, those in domestic service in the printers' households but also those who were an integral part of the newspaper business.[69] The witness statements of the arrested women illustrate how the newspaper made its way from printshop to public. Catherine Brett's husband John had been employed by Mist as a warehouse man, whose job was 'to keep the flow of printing paper, to deliver it out to ye Workmen, [and] to deliver out ye Papers printed there, to those who come to purchase them, particularly that wch is intitled Mist's Weekly

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[68] Examination of John Wilford by Delafaye, 19 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 154.

[69] P. McDowell, The women of Grub Street: press, politics, and gender in the London literary marketplace, 1678-1730 (Oxford, 1998), pp. 33-62.

Journal'.[70] These wholesale purchases would be made by the mercuries for subsequent selling on to street hawkers. Brett herself delivered out two quires (50 sheets) of the paper for 6*s.* and another parcel of half a quire (12 sheets) for 18*d.* to un-named (and, Brett claimed, unseen) buyers. She would also go out seeking outlets for the newspaper, such as when she visited Anne Neville 'to ask her if she would have any of ye Journals that Week, to wch ye sd Neville answered she would'.[71] Neville, acting on behalf of her employer, the mercury woman Elizabeth Nutt (who was herself in custody at this point), purchased 19 quires of the paper.[72] However, it was up to the individuals whether they risked the displeasure of the government by taking on the selling of works that may prove seditious. The testimony of Catherine Nutt, daughter of Elizabeth, gives one example of how different people could weigh the risks of publication against the possibilities of profit:

> upon what has happened in relation to ye Treasonable Libel intitled [*Mist's Weekly Journal*] of August 24th 1728; she resolved not to take in any more of ye paper thus intitled nor sell any of them in her Mother's pamphlet shop under ye Royal Exchange, & accordingly she forbore to take Mist's Weekly Journal of Saturday last; But Mr Walker a Bookseller whose shop is over against her said Mother's shop, did openly sell ye Journal of that Day, and told this Deponent there was no danger in it she need not be afraid, but she answered she would touch none of them.[73]

Getting the Libel to market was not simply a matter of inserting Wharton's text into the latest issue. It required a certain level of preparation and access to the resources of printers who may well have been entirely

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[70] Examination of Catherine Brett, 19 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 152.
[71] Examination of Catherine Brett, 19 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 152.
[72] Examination of Anne Neville by Delafaye, 19 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 158; McDowell, Women of Grub Street, p. 54*n*.
[73] Deposition of Catherine, the daughter of Elizabeth Nutt, 20 September, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 162.

opposed to its politics. Yet in many ways, the production of this extraordinary libel relied on the common business practices of the day. While the provenance of the printed materials may have been secretive, and their production clandestine, those responsible relied on traditional co-operation within the printing community. Nor did the Libel require a clandestine system of publication: it was in no way *samizdat*, but instead went through the normal market supply chain from printer to mercury to bookseller and hawker. Of course, by the very nature of publication, the appearance of the Persian Libel was brought to the attention of those who it antagonised: the British government.

The policing and prosecution of the Persian Libel

Since 1695, the year the Licensing Act was allowed to lapse, there had been no official system of pre-publication censorship in England. As a result, Britons enjoyed the most liberal press laws in eighteenth-century Europe. However, this does not mean that the print trade was protected by assumptions of a 'free press', nor from government surveillance or censorship. In the years after 1695, there would be several attempts at resurrecting some system of licensing. Both contemporaries and historians have seen in the Stamp Acts of 1712 and 1724 an attempt to regulate the press by driving certain newspapers to the wall through fiscal impositions. Schemes for press regulation abounded in the first half of the eighteenth century, from the suggestion of the republican whig John Toland that the Stamp Act should be further tightened in order to 'deliver the common people

from the distracting plague of those Journals which are the Scandal of King George's reign' to frankly crank proposals for post-publication regulation of the press, such as one involving the creation of a mini-parliament to act as a court in such matters.[74] Representative bodies from Grand Juries to the Houses of Parliament could also act in the manner of a censor, condemning books, ordering them to be burnt by the common hangman, or seeking the prosecution of those involved with their production.[75] The awareness of censorship and the fear of the possibility of the reimposition of the licensing system meant that when a similar system of licensing was brought in for the stage in 1737, there were fears it was the first step towards a return to overt censorship of the press.[76]

It was in this context of a semi-detached liberty of the press that the British government operated a surveillance of the outpourings of the printing presses. While it is well known that various ministries, both tory and whig,

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[74] J. Toland, 'Proposal for regulating ye News-Papers', B.L. Add. 4295, ff. 49-50; [F. Squire], A faithful report of a genuine debate concerning the liberty of the press, addressed to a candidate at the ensuing election (London, 1740), pp. 31-56.

[75] For instance, Mist's newspaper had already been the subject of a presentment of the Grand Jury of Middlesex in 1718, when it was denounced as 'a false scandalous seditious & insolent Libell tending to the poysoning & corrupting of the Minds of his Maties Subjects and reflecting in a false scandalous Manner on his Maty & his Government', T.N.A., SP 35/13, f.132. He had also come under the severe displeasure of the House of Lords in 1720 for his newspaper's coverage of the persecution of Protestants in the Palatinate, requesting that George I order his prosecution. Mist was sentenced to the pillory, fined, and imprisoned, Lords' Journals, xxi, pp. 344, 347, 437-8.

[76] Anon., The independant [*sic.*] Briton (London, 1742), pp. 17-18 compares the case of the stage and the press. For the Licensing Act 1737, see M.J. Kinservik, Disciplining satire: the censorship of satiric comedy on the eighteenth-century London stage (London, 2002) and V.J. Liesenfeld, The Licensing Act of 1737 (London, 1984).

employed party writers and promoted newspapers favourable to the government, even to the point that the Walpole administration purchased the *London Journal* and turned it overnight into a mouthpiece for the government, it should be borne in mind that the whig governments of the first two Georges also pursued an active policy of surveillance of the opposition press. The system is outlined in an undated memorandum, written in the hand of Anthony Cracherode, the Solicitor to the Treasury.

Cracherode proposed that someone 'skill'd in the Law, and Conversant in prosecution for printing & publishing of Libels be allow'd a Reasonable Salary for perusing all the printer News-papers & Journals, and all pamphlets, as soon as they come out, and to mark the criminal passages'. This 'peruser' of the press would then pass on the information to Charles Delafaye, under secretary of state, who would set the wheels of a prosecution in motion. In the meantime, so that 'there may be no want of Evidence agt the publishers of such Libels, the messengers of the press be order'd to buy up one of every sort, as soon as publish'd, as to get it mark'd by proper witnesses, and then deliver it to the sd peruser'.[77] This monitoring of the press was supplemented by other sources of information on seditious printers, such as the reporting of rumour and – as we have seen in the case of Edmund Curll – the volunteering of information by informers.

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[77] 'A proposal for suppressing of Libels', n.d., T.N.A., SP 35/40, f. 228. An example of the messengers' work can be seen in a copy of the Craftsman transmitted to the ministry by Nicholas Paxton, Cracherode's successor: the offending passages (including a quotation taken from John of Gaunt's 'This England' speech from Shakespeare's Richard II) are underlined, and the paper marked 'Bought Jan. 13th 1732/3 at A Dodds without Temple Bar' and signed by the messenger, T.N.A., SP 36/29, ff. 13, 15.

It was this system of after-the-fact monitoring that brought the Libel to the attention of the ministry. The reaction of the government, as we have seen in the dispatches from Hampton Court, was quick in its indignation, although perhaps not as quick as it might have been in executing its prosecution: a warrant to search Mist's house was not issued until 4 September, a full week after the newspaper's publication.[78] It was also punitive. The official response to the Persian Libel was the most serious government action taken against a seditious libel between the execution of John Matthews, printer of *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*, for high treason and the furore surrounding the *North Briton*'s 'number 45'.[79] The numbers arrested were extraordinary, stretching the capacity of those involved in their detaining. The three messengers required to round everybody up, Samuel Crew, John Hutchins, and Thomas Bincham, appealed for extra expenses to be paid to them in recompense for the extra expenses incurred by improvised measures they had to take:

> wee had more Prisoners than wee could Secure without Assistance to watch and guard them, being constantly out in search of others, and no Messengers in Town to keep any of them, that Hutchins having Eight of the Principal Men in his house, which was more than his Strong Room could hold, was under a necessity of having two Men day and night to prevent their Corresponding, or making their Escape, that Bincham, and Crew, kept as many as they could with Safety, and the rest wee were obliged to carry to Mr Nobles, and to have a man there to look after them. We paid the said Men four Shillings per Day and night, each, from ye 20th of August to ye 21st of September when Ten of the abovementioned Prisoners were sent to Newgate, that Tho Randall and James Foord the two Devill Boys, who was almost naked, we were under

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[78] Warrant to search Mist's house, 4 September 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 104.
[79] For John Wilkes, see E. Hellmuth, '"The palladium of all other English liberties": reflections on the liberty of the press in England during the 1760s and 1770s', in E. Hellmuth (ed.), The transformation of political culture: England and Germany in the late eighteenth century (Oxford, 1990), pp. 467-501; P.D.G. Thomas, John Wilkes: a friend to liberty (Oxford, 1996), pp. 27-56.

> necessity, to lay out fifty Shillings upon them or our house would have been over run with Vermin.[80]

While many of the arrested were eventually discharged after a spell imprisonment, a time often spent protesting innocence and writing petitions for relief from their miserable condition, the government sought to prosecute others through the courts. This was not necessarily the usual course of events: more often, a spell of imprisonment seems to have been considered enough. The government were wary of prosecuting indiscriminately, for fear of creating press martyrs and further publicising their sedition, an attitude confirmed by the Attorney General in 1734, when an opportunity arose to prosecute the *Craftsman* for seditious libel:

> I hope I shall be excused for saying, that tis my humble opinion, that Prosecutions of this sought ought to be avoided as much as possible; For Papers of this kind, if not taken notice of, seldom survive the week, and fall into very few hands; But when Prosecution is commenced, every body enquiring after them, and they are then read by thousands, who otherwise would never have had of them. Besides upon Tryals of this sort, His Majesty's Enemies always take an opportunity of spiriting up ye Mob against the Government, and let the success be one way or the other; It always affords a Handle for Complaint.[81]

However, in this case it was the lack of any taint of Jacobitism that spared the *Craftsman*, as when 'His Majesty's Title is called in Question, or there are any Insinuations in Favour of the Pretender, I think that Prosecutions are absolutely necessary'.[82] It was the Libel's Jacobitism that ensured a prosecution would be carried as far as was allowed. Even then, there remained difficulties for the authorities, not least the matter of what particular offence the

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[80] Crew *et al* – Delafaye, n.d., T.N.A., SP 36/9, ff. 247-8.
[81] Willes – Newcastle, 23 September 1734, T.N.A., SP 36/33, f. 147.
[82] Willes – Newcastle, 23 September 1734, T.N.A., SP 36/33, f. 147.

accused would be prosecuted for. It is clear that all such decisions were made in the context of Matthew's prosecution (and execution) in 1719 for the high treason in publishing *Vox Dei, Vox Populi*.[83] It appears that the government wanted a repeat of this prosecution, now best known as being the only such prosecution for high treason. Unfortunately for the government (though quite fortunate for those arrested), there were several legal obstacles to such a plan of action, obstacles that were readily apparent to those responsible for the prosecutions, the government's law officers, the Attorney General, Sir Philip Yorke, and the Solicitor General, Charles Talbot. Firstly, most of those arrested were 'charged only with publishing the libel which offence is clearly a misdemeanor, & cannot be carried higher'.[84] These people, such as Elizabeth Nutt, did not have their cases taken any further. The remainder were involved with printing the Libel, some in London and one, Edward Farley, for reprinting the Libel in his Bristol newspaper. Even here it was difficult to build a case against them for high treason.

Many of these problems stemmed from the genre of the Libel, its employment of the Persian Letter form, and its use of 'innuendo' – the way in which the reader is to assume for the explicit character an implicit real person. Such criticisms of the great and good, veiled behind assumed names and borrowed robes, were common, and had been a common feature of the *Weekly Journal*'s political commentary throughout its existence. Indeed it had become the common method of the opposition press, particularly the

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[83] P.K. Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, 1688-1788 (Cambridge, 1989), p. 39-40.
[84] Yorke & Talbot – Townshend, 24 November 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/151, f. 56.

Craftsman. Ministerial writers railed against what they saw as an abuse of the freedom of the press, this method by which 'after having labour'd the Subversion of a Government, for thirty Pages together, [the newspapers could] be allowed to bring all off at last, by saying, that such and such Expressions *have only relation to what has happen'd in former Reigns, or in neighbouring Nations*'.[85]

Furthermore, the employment of the Persian Letter form added a layer of 'ficitionality' to the Libel, allowing it to hide behind the fictionality of Montesquieu's novel (which was itself only thinly maintained). Delarivier Manly, the tory writer, had previously escaped punishment for her *New Atlantis*, the subject of a prosecution for seditious libel in 1709-10: her defence had to a large extent relied on presenting the book as a product wholly of her own imagination. She could also suggest that the only people who understood her words to be an attack on real people were her accusers themselves, and thus they were the true libellers.[86] Newspapers again would use this as a defence: their words were innocent and it was only the interpretation placed upon them by their opponents that was guilty.

The law required that it be proved that the accused had 'maliciously advisedly & directly' maintained the Stuart claim to the throne. It was that

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[85] British Gazetteer, 21 September 1728. A defence of the Craftsman's use of innuendo suggested that even in 'the Reigns of *Tiberius*, *Phillip* II of *Spain*, and *Henry* VIII of *England*, but *Sejanus*, the Duke of *Alva*, and Cardinal *Wolsey* would have had their respective Champions' and argued that prosecution of innuendo was a means by which to destroy the freedom of the press, Anon., The doctrine of innuendo's discuss'd, or the liberty of the press maintain'd: being some thoughts upon the present treatment of the printer and publishers of the Craftsman (London, 1731), pp. 4, 11.

[86] C. Gallagher, 'Political crimes and fictional alibies: the case of Delarivier Manley', Eighteenth-Century Studies, 23:4 (1990), pp. 502-4.

'directly' that caused the government some difficulty. While Matthews had declared in favour of the Pretender, 'There the Pretender was called the Chevalier, a name assumed by himself, by which he was commonly known; here he is called the Sophi; a term never used for him before, & the whole paper is Allegorical'. It would be more difficult to persuade 'a Jury that the name Sophi was intended by the persons concern'd in printing to signify the Pretender'.[87]

A final frustration for the government was that the crime of high treason required two witnesses to the fact. In the case of London men there was only one witness. Thus the case against them was 'not sufficient even for the Grand Jury to find the Bill'.[88] So it was for the lesser misdemeanour that they were committed to stand trial for. Delafaye was interested in the case enough and eager for a conviction enough to attend:

> Last Tuesday I had ye pleasure of attending in ye morning till about 5 in ye afternoon at Guildhall ye Tryals of 4 of Mist's Men for ye Journal of Augt 24. They were all found guilty tho' by a Tory Jury. I could not help reflecting what Turn Education in a profession will give to our way of thinking, when the greatest Difficulty we met with was to have a Compositor (he that puts ye Types together for the Press) understood in Law to be a Printer, tho' there was none about ye Press Man; tho' ye last may possibly not know what he is about, wch ye other cannot be ignorant of, for he must spell every word as he goes on wth his Work: However this good Rule we got establisht, That where a Person helps to print or publishes a Libel, it shall not be an Excuse, that he did not know ye Contents of it.[89]

It was some satisfaction for the under secretary of state that the laws governing libel had been made even more favourable to the prosecution,

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[87] Yorke & Talbot – Townshend, 24 November 1728, T.N.A. SP 36/151, ff. 56-7.
[88] Yorke & Talbot – Townshend, 24 November 1728, T.N.A. SP 36/151, f. 57
[89] Delafaye – Poyntz, 27 February 1728/9, B.L., Add. 75451 (unbound mss).

removing the excuse often used by printers that they had no understanding of the import of the words they were loading into the press. Delafaye may perhaps have found further solace in the fate of Edward Farley, the Bristol printer who had given a provincial airing to the Persian Libel.

Like the original Libel, the reprint had been condemned as a seditious libel. Unlike Mist, this printer remained *in situ* and had been taken up for his offence. Farley claimed to be entirely innocent: he had received Mist's newspaper in the post 'in the usual manner as it before been constantly sent to him' (presumably he also plagiarised it in the usual manner); he had only 'inadvertently' reprinted it, being entirely unaware of its contents; and as soon as he realised the implications of what he had done, 'he immediately gave orders to his servants that the sd papers should be burnt which was accordingly done before twenty of the said news papers were dispos'd of'.[90] For the sake of those twenty papers, he faced prosecution for high treason. The case against him was far stronger, the law officers decided. Unlike the case of the London printers, there were two witnesses to his treason: there was therefore 'ground to prosecute him for Treason within the reason of Mathew's case'.[91] However, the government was to be once again frustrated.

The problem lay with the witnesses. One, Richard Science, was Farley's father-in-law and an extremely unwilling witness. The other, Richard Strechley, was well known in Exeter for being a wastrel, one who had lost a handsome inheritance through his own extravagance. So notorious was he that the government received advice that because 'he does not stand right wth the

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[90] Petition of Edward Farley, n.d., T.N.A., SP 36/16, f. 268.
[91] Yorke & Talbot – Townshend, 24 November 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/151, f. 58.

Sober and Judicious part of the City ... his evidence will not have a sufficient weight with the Jury to convict the Deft unless the other Witness so prove the Overt Act be a willing and strong Witness and a man of Character'. With Science so unreliable a witness, indeed one who was 'so far from being a willing Witness, that nothing will come from him but what is forced by Questions, and he now recedes from the most material part of his Evidence', the case against Farley for high treason was collapsing.[92] The best the ministry could hope for was another trial for a lesser misdemeanour.

The Farley case was in danger of becoming a disaster for the government. It had been the intention of the ministry that the Persian Libel was so scandalous in its implications, so clearly a treasonable piece of popular Jacobitism, that those responsible should face 'the utmost Severity of the Law'.[93] It had not quite worked out like that. Mist and Wharton had both escaped to the continent. Only junior printers could stand trial, and then only for a misdemeanour. The one person who could stand trial for high treason, Farley, was hardly a significant figure, merely a provincial printer.

They had gone so far as to have him indicted by the Grand Jury, but having gone so far they could go no further. If he stood trial for high treason, the prosecution would most probably fail – and it was clearly unthinkable for Farley to be found not guilty. But if, after all the effort it had gone to, 'the Crown should prosecute for the same fact as a Misdemeanour, that would be absolutely giving up the point of High Treason, & owning to the World that it is

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[92] Representation of Mr Gill against Farley, n.d., T.N.A., SP 36/9, ff. 157-8; Yorke – [Newcastle], 14 July 1729, T.N.A., SP 36/13, ff. 69-71.
[93] [?] – Yorke, 25 August 1728, T.N.A., SP 36/8, f. 71.

in Law an Offence of a lower degree' – also an unthinkable outcome that would only encourage similar offences. In the opinion of the Attorney General, the most prudential route would be for the government to take comfort from the fact that the Grand Jury had found that the Farley's offence had been worthy of a charge of high treason and that 'the fear of that will in some measure continue' among the world of Grub Street. In the meantime Farley, who had petitioned for clemency, could quietly be granted a pardon.[94]

It was too late for Farley, however. While the government was deciding what decision to make, he died in prison. Unlike Matthews, Farley never became a martyr, either for the Jacobites or the freedom of the press. Nor could the government use his as an example of the terrible fate of those who would follow the example of Mist and Wharton. Of no use to anyone, he was forgotten. By overlooking this aspect of the Persian Libel, the desire of the government to see as many as possible be punished as severely as possible and its cost, one can easily overestimate the liberal nature of British government towards the press in this period. The state possessed the machinery to monitor the always potentially seditious fruit of Grub Street and, if necessary, to punish.

Conclusion

The Persian Libel was the most significant piece to be published in any of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers. However, considering that it was also the most significant episode in the relationship between government and press

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[94] Yorke – Newcastle, 14 July 1729, T.N.A., SP 36/13, ff. 69-71.

between the execution of Matthews and the prosecution of Wilkes, it has received surprisingly little attention. This chapter has attempted to redress the balance. The appearance of the Libel is interesting enough, in its amusing attempt to reclaim the warming pan myth for the Jacobites – although in other ways it is utterly typical of Jacobite rhetoric of the period, stressing Hanoverian usurpation and Stuart legitimacy. The fact that it is the product of as peculiar a man as Philip Wharton is another source of interest. But it also illuminates the nature of eighteenth-century libel, stressing the scandalous aspects of the genre. By examining the Persian aspect, one can see the links between newspaper reporting of foreign affairs, political commentary, and the Libel. The Persian context also shows the fluidity of print culture, the way that a satire on French government could leech into British political rhetoric. The Persian Libel was the first real use of Montesquieu's work in English, one that would continue with other works, such as George Lyttelton's better-known (and whiggish) *Persian Letters* of 1735. The links between Montesquieu, British journalism, and 'the letters from a spy' genre are interesting in themselves and deserve further study. Most importantly, the Persian Libel illustrates the interaction between the British government and the British press – between state and sedition – and that this interaction was not as liberal as it is often painted.

Conclusion

The problem restated and some answers suggested

Why were the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist so popular? According to many common assumptions of the period, they really should not have been. Firstly, they were notorious for Jacobitism. The Jacobites not only opposed the Glorious Revolution settlement, they also repudiated the political world that was its legacy: not only German kings, but whig governance and Dutch finance. It was this aspect of Jacobitism that helped to account for its lack of appeal to the middling sorts, the critical masses of the British body politic that 'increasingly decided the framework of debate and the terms of tenure on which the traditional politics of monarchy and aristocracy were conducted'.[1] This is the second reason why it is hard to understand the success of Mist's newspapers. It was the middling sorts who are supposed to have composed the audience for newspapers and other periodicals, the bourgeois public sphere.[2] Now, the middling sort was not entirely unreceptive to oppositional politics – the success of the *Craftsman* is the most obvious example of this point.[3] However, the appeal of the *Craftsman* has often been

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[1] P. Langford, A polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783 (Oxford, 1989), p. 68. See also N. Rogers, 'The middling sort in eighteenth-century politics', in J. Barry & C.W. Brooks (eds), The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800 (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 159-80.

[2] B. Harris, 'Praising the middling sort? Social identity in eighteenth-century British newspapers', in A.J. Kidd & D. Nicholls (eds), The making of the British middle class? Studies of regional and cultural diversity since the eighteenth century (Stroud, 1998), pp. 1-18.

[3] S. Varey, 'The Craftsman', in J.A. Downie & T.N. Corns (eds), Telling people what to think: early eighteenth-century periodicals from *The Review* to *The Rambler* (London, 1993), pp. 67-74.

explained as being precisely because it offered a language of opposition that was not Jacobite but 'patriot'.[4] Yet we are left with Mist's *Weekly Journal*, a remarkably long-lived 'Jacobite newspaper' that, at its peak, was the leading newspaper on the London market. We could just accept that there was a permanent Jacobite phalanx buying the newspaper and that it was Jacobitism, not Bolingbrokean patriotism, that was in the vanguard of political opposition, or we can look for other factors that might also help to explain the appeal of the *Weekly Journal*.

There are obvious problems for the historian who wishes to explain the appeal of a particular newspaper and the motives of its readers: the lack of documentary evidence. People did not tend to keep records of their reading experience of such ephemeral literature.[5] We have instead to make some reasonable assumptions about consumer behaviour based upon the evidence we do have, the newspapers themselves – in particular the quality of the *Weekly Journal* as a newspaper and its political identity.

One central aim of this study has been to stress the importance of seeing the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist as just that, newspapers – not

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[4] Q. Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition: the case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in N. McKendrick, (ed.), Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J.H. Plumb (London, 1974), pp. 121-8.

[5] Dudley Ryder is one exception, though the future Lord Chief Justice does not record the then newly-born Weekly Journal; or, Saturday's Post in his diary for 1716, The diary of Dudley Ryder, 1715-16, ed. W. Matthews (London, 1939). J. Raven, H. Small, & N. Tadmor, 'Introduction: the practice and representation of reading in England', in J. Raven, H. Small, & N. Tadmor (eds), The practice and representation of reading in England (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1-21, surveys some of the problems of the history of reading, as does I. Jackson, 'Approaches to the history of readers and reading in eighteenth-century Britain', Historical Journal 47 (2004), pp. 1041-54.

solely a transmission mechanism for political messages, but a whole package of content. That is why so much attention was paid in the first chapter to the back pages of the newspaper and the advertisements they contained. The newspaper has to be understood primarily as a commercial object and – in the absence of detailed financial accounts – nowhere else is the commercialism of a newspaper more visible. There were reasons beyond the political that explained a newspaper's commercial appeal: the extent of advertising in Mist's newspapers suggest that they were fully integrated within the commercial world of early eighteenth-century London, if not England as a whole.

This integration within commercial life – even if it was born out of necessity for a newspaper operating without any obvious political subsidy – offers one way to help explain the *Weekly Journal*'s appeal as a newspaper. However, this use of advertising rates as proof of success does suffer from a certain amount of circularity: the level of advertising demonstrates the newspaper's popularity, but advertisers chose to use that particular newspaper over its rivals because of its popularity. Perhaps one could suggest that this is not so much circular reasoning as an example of positive feedback, as advertising leads to popularity, which then leads to more advertisers.

Other inherent virtues may help explain the popularity of Nathaniel Mist's newspapers. The quality of news reporting, say, or the pleasure given by the letters, essays and other miscellaneous content. In the absence of contemporary opinions, the historian is often left to pronounce on the merits

or otherwise of a newspaper. Of course, individual taste can be backed up with assumptions about what is appealing today and what one imagines appealed to the people of the eighteenth century. In any case, I am reluctant to go further than note that over the two years it took to catalogue the contents of the entire run of the newspaper, both *Mist's* and *Fog's* contained – along with the humdrum, the trivial, and the baffling – reports and writing that was in a clear style, often amusing, and sometimes experimental.

Can one judge the quality of the newspaper by some more objective standards, such as accuracy in news reporting? Certainly, the *Weekly Journal* and its rivals all used a notion of accuracy as a prime newspaper virtue, and regularly attacked each other for errors of omission and commission. It would be impracticable to ascertain how accurate Mist's reports were in comparison to others. It would require a knowledge of not only the event being reported, but also a reconstruction of how information of the event reached the newspaper: what information they had to hand, who provided it, and the decisions that were made on how to present it. Such evidence does not exist. However, the language of accuracy and truthfulness seems in many ways to have attached itself to partisan politics, as the *Weekly Journal* castigated whig writers for errors and misleading reports and its whig rival castigated tory or Jacobitical lies. The link between credit, the willingness of a reader to believe one newspaper over another, and political belief seems a reasonable assumption to make: tories were more likely to believe a tory writer's version of events and the same held true for whigs. It is this question of political identity that most fully helps to explain the newspaper's appeal,

although that is not to say that that political identity can be simply tagged as 'Jacobite'.

There are certain things that one can say with confidence about Nathaniel Mist's *Weekly Journal*. The newspaper was owned and published by a Jacobite. It carried news of the doings of the Pretender and his court in exile. It supported causes intimately linked with the Jacobite movement, most obviously the nonjurors and the Scottish episcopalians. It was at the time, and is today, seen as a Jacobite newspaper. Was it the newspaper's commitment to Jacobitism that meant so many readers bought it week in, week out? That would be, after all, the simplest explanation.

Recent research has recently done much to raise awareness of a Jacobitism that was not the traitorous conspiracy of last resort for a shadowy band of malcontents.[6] The number of 'outed' Jacobites grows, as historians take it upon themselves to decode hidden intentions, often finding Jacobites in the least likely of locations.[7] Historians have become more attuned to the way in which Jacobite slogans and themes worked on the political imagination of the crowd.[8] Even the Stuart court in exile has been rehabilitated, its reputation for ineffectiveness and shabby genteel poverty re-

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[6] P.K. Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, 1688-1788 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 269-307.

[7] Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, pp. 161-232.

[8] E. Cruickshanks, 'Charles Spencer, third earl of Sunderland, and Jacobitism', English Historical Review 113 (1998), pp. 65-76, fails to convince that the whig statesman was an agent of influence for the Jacobite cause, for the reasons enumerated in C. Jones, 'Evidence, interpretation and definitions in Jacobite historiography: a reply to Eveline Cruickshanks', English Historical Review 113 (1998), pp. 77-90.

examined.[9] Much work has gone into stressing the presence of Jacobites in London politics, not only in the sense that individual Jacobite MPs were returned to parliament for the metropolitan seats, but also in the intrigues in the Corporation of London, in both the Court of Aldermen and the Common Council, the civic institutions of the city, and the politics of the Jacobite crowd.[10] However, the *Weekly Journal* did not succeed solely because it was a Jacobite newspaper for Jacobite readers; in some ways the newspaper's Jacobite link is the least interesting thing about it. Crucially, the key to the newspaper's success, that this Jacobite enterprise could reach out beyond the confines of conspiracy, is down to the newspaper's wider political identity.

The political identity of a 'Jacobite newspaper'

The newspapers of Nathaniel Mist had a clear political identity, which has been studied here under three aspects: civil, ecclesiastical, and cultural. That is not to say that these three sub-divisions are the exclusive component parts of a political identity, but a close reading of the newspaper over the two decades of its existence suggest they were the most important. For example, one could produce an analysis of the newspaper's stance on the politics of

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[9] E.T. Corp, A court in exile: the Stuarts in France, 1689-1715 (Cambridge, 2004); D. Szechi, 'The image of the court: idealism, politics and the evolution of the British court, 1689-1730', in E.T. Corp (ed.), The Stuart court in Rome: the legacy of exile (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 49-64.

[10] P.K. Monod, 'Pierre's white hat: theatre, Jacobitism and popular protest in London, 1689-1760', in E. Cruickshanks (ed.), By force or by default? The Revolution of 1688-1689 (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 159-89; Monod, Jacobitism and the English people, 225-32; C. Rose, '"Seminaries of faction and rebellion": Jacobites, whigs and the London charity schools, 1716-24', Historical Journal 34 (1991), pp. 831-55.

the law: the status of law in the British polity, the idea that all are equal under the law, the individual practitioners of the law. This chapter would have paid attention to the *Weekly Journal*'s stance on political prisoners, such as the Jacobites who had conspired to assassinate William III in the 1690s and were still imprisoned in Mist's day, a closer examination of its consistent defence of poor debtors in prison, and its use of legal scandal, such as the successful impeachment of Lord Chancellor Macclesfield in 1725.

However, the three aspects chosen have revealed much of the political stance of the newspaper. The civil politics of the newspaper were not publicly Jacobite. This is obviously important: while there is no denying Nathaniel Mist's personal Jacobitism and it remains fair to describe the *Weekly Journal* as a 'Jacobite newspaper', the transmission of that Jacobitism was not through an explicit discussion of the legitimacy of the Stuart claim to the throne. Straightforwardly Jacobite political argument is exceedingly rare in printed material where those responsible for its publication are identified on mast and colophon. Where it is public it is also, for the most part, argument from implication and innuendo.

The use of contract theory in Jacobite political argument, for which *Mist's Weekly Journal* has become known for among historians, is just one aspect of this argument from implication, just one strategy among many that the newspaper used to put forward its case. The one line of Jacobite reasoning that united Jacobites – that the Stuart claim to the throne was more legitimate than the Hanoverian one – was proscribed in the most definite manner, a sentence of death for high treason. Therefore other

strategies, other lines of political reasoning were employed instead. Where sincerity in political argument is banned, irony takes its place. So while there are letters and essays in the *Weekly Journal* that use the language of contract to hint at the Jacobite case, this does not necessarily mean one can say that Jacobite argument became contractarian. Rather, it was one ironic argument among others.

Indeed, as we have seen, the newspaper also employed older forms of political language: those of patriarchy, divine right, and passive obedience. This was a newspaper whose public civil politics were recognisably tory, not whig. This should not be too surprising. There was no reason for people in the late 1710s and early 1720s to believe that the whig supremacy would last for nearly fifty years. The Sunderland / Stanhope ministry had after all witnessed a schism within the whig party, the South Sea bubble had almost caused the downfall of the regime, and afterwards it seemed likely the reversionary interest would produce a change in affairs. There was little reason to abandon wholesale tory political argument. Indeed, this was probably the case until the Walpole administration had survived the Excise Crisis of 1734. While the crisis may have hobbled the whig government, it broke the back of the opposition of the 1720s – Bolingbroke retired from the scene and *Fog's Weekly Journal* limped on ineffectively for three more years, eventually giving up opposition for apolitical quiescence before the death of its owner forced the paper to close.[11]

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[11] In the immediate aftermath of the opposition's failure to fully exploit the Excise Crisis in the general election of 1734, the Under Secretary of State, Charles Delafaye, found himself at Bath for health reasons. Bolingbroke was

Tory political argument was thus not without political significance. Nor was support for the Stuarts impossible to express in the public arena, so long as those Stuarts who were the object of this support were safely in the grave. 'Carolinism' may be an ungainly word, but the phenomenon of Stuart nostalgia it describes existed and dominated the political rhetoric of the *Weekly Journal*. The dynasty of the Martyr, Charles II and Queen Anne was not entirely without merit. By playing upon the more positive aspects of the history of the House of Stuart, the newspaper could achieve two things: it could remind readers that not all Stuarts had been absolutist tyrants of whig imagination; and keep alive the figure of the Stuart claimant without mentioning him by name. Such a Carolinist position was also politically 'safe' in that it could appear to amount to little more than a vigorous defence of monarchy: whiggish criticisms of it could easily be branded 'republican', popular conceptions of the 1640s played upon, and reminders issued that the Hanoverian claim was one that ultimately depended upon their own Stuart blood, however watered down it may have been.

The newspaper then, while Jacobite, could reach beyond the committed to appeal to essentially pro-Hanoverian, or non-committal, tories. Other aspects of its political identity could widen that appeal further. This is especially true when one looks at the *Weekly Journal*'s approach to

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there at the same time and the 'Anti-Minister' struck a sad figure: 'He has had indeed no great Encouragements to shew himself in publick, for when he came into the Pump Room the morning after his Arrival, he could not but observe that every body was curious to know which was he, & staring at him as a strange Sight, but by no means with any Signs of Applause or Approbation', Delafaye – Newcastle, 9 October 1734, London, British Library, Add. 32689, f. 449.

ecclesiastical and cultural politics. By leaving aside questions of dynastic succession, one can more easily see the ways in which a newspaper with a certain reputation could yet appeal to readers living outside the Jacobite catchment area. In both cases, the newspaper's political identity was amenable to people who may well have otherwise found its views on civil politics objectionable.

When it comes to matters of religion, there remained in England a strong sentiment of support for the Church of England, its doctrines and structures. The Church was more than just the tory party at prayer, and could rely on those who were whigs in regards to civil politics to support in questions of ecclesiastical politics. It is of course the case that all whigs in government were members of the Established Church, as prescribed by the various tests needed to qualify for office. It is too easy to say that this was for the whigs a matter of expediency, that whigs were by definition low church and 'for' dissent. While it is undoubted that dissenters were in the main solidly whig, the whig party contained many who were content with the uneasy religious truce that was the product of the Glorious Revolution, leaving the Church of England as the church of the state if not of all the English people, and had no wish to see this settlement altered further.[12]

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[12] S. Taylor, 'Sir Robert Walpole, the Church of England, and the Quaker tithe bill of 1736', Historical Journal 28 (1985), pp. 51-77. Such attitudes continued after the fall of Walpole in 1742 and can be seen in the careers of men such as the Duke of Newcastle, see S. Taylor, '"The Fac Totum in ecclesiastic affairs." The Duke of Newcastle and the crown's ecclesiastical patronage', Albion 24 (1992), pp. 409-33.

This is certainly true of the majority of the episcopate in these years, too often considered as whig lobby fodder.[13] We can see this combination of 'whig in state and tory in church' in men such as William Wake and Edmund Gibson. Research on the church in the localities also seems to bear out this combination.[14] Indeed, it seems to have been the policy of the Walpole administration to accept this accommodation and to rein in whig anti-clerical sentiment. Certainly, on those occasions when the whig regime had to choose between its dissenting allies and the established church, it did not press the point of religious liberalism. There may well have been Indemnity Acts for the benefit of dissenters, but there was no repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

It is easy to imagine that many of the readers of the *Weekly Journal* possessed what might be called a 'reading strategy' that meant certain aspects of the newspaper's politics could be entertained, while others disagreed with.[15] Indeed, one common problem with the use of party labels in describing a newspaper's readership is that it can lead to unhelpful generalisations. By reading a particular newspaper, an individual is not

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[13] S. Taylor, 'The bishops of Westminster in the mid-eighteenth century', in C. Jones (ed.), A pillar of the constitution: the House of Lords in British politics, 1640-1784 (London, 1989), pp. 147-65.

[14] W. Gibson, '"A happy fertile soil which bringeth forth abundantly": the diocese of Winchester, 1689-1800', in J. Gregory & J.S. Chamberlain (eds), The national church in local perspective: the Church of England and the regions, 1660-1800 (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 119, stresses 'unity and accordance' over party division, for example.

[15] An attempt to recover one individual's particular and complex responses to her wide range of reading material can be found in J. Brewer, 'Reconstructing the reader: prescriptions, texts and strategies in Anna Larpent's reading', in Raven, Small, and Tadmor, Practice and representation of reading in England, pp. 226-45.

signing up to a coherent party line that has clearly staked out positions on all contemporary issues. This can readily be seen when approaching the *Weekly Journal*'s cultural politics. For all talk of politeness being a 'whig project', there is no reason to imagine that political responses to the changing cultural circumstances of the early eighteenth century can be so neatly mapped onto a whig / tory party divide.[16] One conclusion that can be made from a close reading of one of the most popular newspapers of the day – and one that is worth stressing – is that political identities were far more fluid than one often gives credit for. To call a newspaper 'whig', 'tory', or 'Jacobite' is no more than to use a convenient shorthand and one that more often than not describes pseudonymous writers rather than anonymous readers.

A succès de scandale?

Of course, many people may have bought the newspaper because they were determined to be outraged. Many more may have bought it out of a sense of political titillation. Reading a notorious newspaper must have been the safest way in the early eighteenth century to experience opposition, particularly those forms of opposition tinged with sedition and treason. It was certainly safer than writing or distributing oppositional literature, as the

[16] Markku Peltonen has gone furthest in this revision of political politeness: 'Of course, many whigs discussed politeness at great length, but so did many non-whigs. More importantly, there was no distinctively whig interpretation of it. Nor was there any single whig theory about the relationship of politeness and commerce. Some whigs these two concepts as antithetical; some were not particularly interested in the relationship at all', M. Peltonen, 'Politeness and whiggism, 1688-1732', Historical Journal, 48 (2005), p. 414.

miserable conditions of those printers, assistants, and hawkers arrested as a result of the Persian Libel of 1728 can attest.

There are many ways to view the Persian Libel. An unfashionable – although not unimportant – way would be to see it as part of the longer narrative of the rise of a free press.[17] Some might balk at this Jacobite contribution to whig history, but there is no great harm in this. However, as interesting as this long-term context might be, it is also important to understand how the Persian Libel illustrates the relationship between state and press in the early eighteenth century. This relationship was not 'liberal' in any meaningful sense – there was no easy acceptance of the existence of a free press as an integral part of a political culture – but nor was it marked by a repressive control of the contents of the press. In short, this was a period where the rules governing the interplay of state and press were being worked out. The Persian Libel was punished not because that was the automatic response of an authoritarian state to a critical press, but because the Libel had gone beyond the then currently established boundaries of comment.

The Persian Libel can be used to show more clearly the interaction between the state, print, and readers. In many ways, this has been a study in what has been called 'the print culture of parliament': an attempt 'to examine the ways in which print impacted upon practical political life and political

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[17] For this longer narrative, F.S. Siebert, Freedom of the press in England, 1476-1776: the rise and decline of government controls (Urbana, IL, 1952) is exhaustive, but over-schematised; B. Wilson, The laughter of triumph: William Hone and the fight for the free press (London, 2005) marks a recent return to the tradition.

processes'.[18] Through the Persian Libel one can do precisely that, examining the practicalities of printing a piece of seditious libel: its authorship and printing, and the response of both government and other institutions. This can also be done without recourse to a public sphere. The conceptual use of the public sphere has become problematic: we have earlier and earlier public spheres, their bourgeois nature is questioned, their rational-critical style ignored.[19] Often the term 'public sphere', freed of theoretical specifics such as its chronology and bourgeois character, has become a synonym for 'public opinion'.[20] It can sometimes appear as if we have a "historians' Habermas", one whose concerns centre on the public sphere, rather than the really-existing Jurgen Habermas, whose theoretical interests have long since changed and who would not himself endorse his own work so uncritically.[21] The time may well have come for a moratorium on its use by historians.

Instead one might return to the evidence at hand, the newspapers themselves. Newspapers require a close reading: they also need to be made something unfamiliar again. Close reading would allow for the political identities of other newspapers to be investigated more fully than they have been so far. This could open our eyes to a far wider range of political arguments than we have charted so far, provided that we start out by trying

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[18] J. Peacey, 'The print culture of parliament, 1600-1800', Parliamentary History 26 (2007), pp. 1-2.
[19] For a recent re-shaping of the public sphere as a category, see P. Lake & S. Pincus, 'Rethinking the public sphere in early modern England', Journal of British Studies 45 (2006), pp. 270-92.
[20] J. Habermas, 'Further reflections on the public sphere', in C. Calhoun (ed.), Habermas and the public sphere (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 421-61.
[21] For some new directions in the sociological, rather than historiographical, use of the public sphere, see N. Crossley & J.M. Roberts (eds), After Habermas: new perspectives on the public sphere (Oxford, 2004).

to understand exactly what it was that the newspaper was actually saying rather than searching the newspaper's columns for signs of a predetermined party argument. It is also important to keep in mind how the newspaper worked as a whole object – how news, essays and advertising shaped each other. The timing is propitious: the digitisation of the Burney Collection of early modern newspapers will make using this incredibly rich resource far easier.[22]

Newspapers cannot be studied though themselves alone though. It is just as important to be aware to the contexts shaping the newspaper, not only events in the political realm which are reported and reacted to, but the politics of a commercial world and the markets newspapers operated in. This is often the politics of the personal: historians should also extend their studies of newspaper politics to the relationships of the rival printers, their newspapers and the other occupants of Grub Street. When this study of the newspapers of Nathaniel Mist can be placed alongside similar studies of the *Craftsman*, *Read's Weekly Journal*, *Applebee's Weekly Journal* and the rest, then we will be closer to having a complete political history of Grub Street.

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[22] While one should be sceptical of simplistic claims that things will be better in the future because of the internet, the digitisation of the Burney Collection follows in the footsteps of the path finding Proceedings of the Old Bailey project, www.oldbaileyonline.org, for which see T. Hitchcock & R. Shoemaker, 'Digitising history from below: the Old Bailey Proceedings online, 1674-1834', History Compass 4:2 (2006), pp. 193-202.

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